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GREECE AND THE ALLIES
1914-1922

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SONGS OF MODERN GREECE
MACEDONIAN FOLKLORE
THE TALE OF A TOUR IN MACEDONIA
GREECE IN EVOLUTION (ED.)
TURKEY IN TRANSITION
TURKEY, GREECE, AND THE GREAT POWERS
UNDER THE TURK IN CONSTANTINOPLE

GREECE AND THE ALLIES
1914–1922

BY

G. F. ABBOTT

WITH A PREFACE BY

ADMIRAL MARK KERR, C.B., M.V.O.

LATE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ROYAL HELLENIC NAVY AND HEAD OF THE BRITISH NAVAL MISSION TO GREECE

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PREFACE

THE late convulsions in Greece and Turkey, and the consequent revival of all the mis-statements which, during the War, flowed from ignorance or malice, render the publication of this book particularly opportune.

Mr. Abbott deals with his subject in all its aspects, and presents for the first time to the British public a complete and coherent view of the complicated circumstances that made Greece, during the War, the battle-ground of rival interests and intrigues, from which have grown the present troubles.

In this book we get a clear account of the little-understood relations between the Greek and the Serb; of the attitude of Greece towards the Central Powers and the Entente; of the dealings between Greece and the Entente and the complications that ensued therefrom. Mr. Abbott traces the evil to its source—the hidden pull of British versus French interests in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the open antagonism between M. Venizelos and King Constantine.

All these subjects are of acute interest, and not the least interesting is the last.

The persecution of King Constantine by the Press of the Allied countries, with some few good exceptions, has been one of the most tragic affairs since the Dreyfus case. Its effect on the state of Europe during and since the War is remarkable. If King Constantine's advice had been followed, and the Greek plan for the taking of the Dardanelles had been carried out, the war would probably have been shortened by a very considerable period, Bulgaria and Rumania could have been kept out of the War, and probably the Russian Revolution and collapse would not have taken place; for, instead of having Turkey to assist Bulgaria, the Allied forces would have been between and separating these two countries.

In this case King Constantine would not have been exiled from his country, and consequently he would not have permitted the Greek Army to be sent to Asia Minor, which he always stated would ruin Greece, as the country was not rich enough or strong enough to maintain an overseas colony next to an hereditary enemy like the Turk.

It is illuminating to remember that the Greek King's policy was fully endorsed by the only competent authorities who had a full knowledge of the subject, which was a purely military one. These were the late Field-Marshal Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, the British Admiral at the head of the Naval Mission in Greece, and Colonel Sir Thomas Cuninghame, British Military Attaché in Athens; but the advice tendered by these three officers was disregarded in favour of that given by the civilians, M. Venizelos and the Allied Ministers.

Mr. Abbott's book will do much to enlighten a misled public as to the history of Greece during the last nine years, and many documents which have not hitherto been before the public are quoted by him from the official originals, to prove the case.

For the sake of truth and justice, which used to flourish in Great Britain, I hope that this book will be read by everyone who has the welfare of the British Empire at heart.

MARK KERR

4 *October*, 1922

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

AS this work goes to press, the British Empire finds itself forced to vindicate its position in the East: a position purchased at the cost of much blood and treasure during the war, to be jeopardized after the conclusion of peace by the defeat of Greece and the defection of France.

In the following pages the reader will find the sequence of events which have inevitably led up to this crisis: an account of transactions hitherto obscured and distorted by every species of misrepresentation and every known artifice for manipulating public opinion.

The volume is not a hasty essay produced to exploit an ephemeral situation. It embodies the fruit of investigations laboriously carried on through six years. A slight account of the earlier events appeared as far back as the winter of 1916 in a book entitled, *Turkey, Greece, and the Great Powers:* that was my first effort to place the subject in its true perspective. The results were interesting. I was honoured by the reproaches of several private and by the reprobation of several public critics; some correspondents favoured me with their anonymous scurrility, and some bigots relieved me of their acquaintance. On the other hand, there were people who, in the midst of a maelstrom of passion, retained their respect for facts.

I pursued the subject further in a weekly journal. Two of my contributions saw the light; the third was suppressed by the Authorities. Its suppression furnished material for a debate in Parliament: "This is a cleverly written article," said Mr. John Dillon, "and I cannot find in it a single word which justifies suppression. All that one can find in it is that it states certain facts which the Government do not like to be known, not that they injure the military situation in the least, but that they show that the Government, in the opinion of the writer, made certain very bad blunders." The Home Secretary's answer was

typical of departmental dialectics: "It is inconceivable to me," he declared, "that the Government would venture to say to the Press, or indicate to it in any way, 'This is our view. Publish it. If you do not, you will suffer.'" What the Government did, in effect, say to the Editor of the *National Weekly* was: "This is not our view. Publish it not. If you do, you will suffer."

With an innocence perhaps pardonable in one who was too intent on the evolution of the world drama to follow the daily development of war-time prohibitions, I next essayed to present to the public through the medium of a book the truth which had been banned from the columns of a magazine. The manuscript of that work, much fingered by the printer, now lies before me, and together with it a letter from the publisher stating that the Authorities had forbidden its publication on pain of proceedings "under 27 (b) of the Defence of the Realm Regulations."

And so it came about that not until now has it been possible for the voice of facts to refute the fables dictated by interest and accepted by credulity. The delay had its advantages: it gave the story, through the natural progress of events, a completeness which otherwise it would have lacked, and enabled me to test its accuracy on every point by a fresh visit to Greece and by reference to sources previously inaccessible, such as the Greek State Papers and the self-revealing publications of persons directly concerned in the transactions here related.

I venture to hope that so thorough an inquiry will convey some new information respecting these transactions even to those who are best acquainted with their general course. If they find nothing attractive in the style of the book, they may find perhaps something useful, something that will deserve their serious reflection, in the matter of it. For let it not be said that a story starting in 1914 is ancient history. Unless one studies the record of Allied action in Greece from the very beginning, he cannot approach with any clear understanding the present crisis—a struggle between Greeks and Turks on the surface, but at bottom a conflict between French and British policies affecting the vital interests of the British Empire.

G. F. A.

5 *October*, 1922

Besides information acquired at first hand, my material is mainly drawn from the following sources:

Greek State Papers now utilized for the first time.

White Book, published by the Government of M. Venizelos under the title, "*Diplomatika Engrapha*, 1913–1917," 2nd edition, Athens, 1920.

Orations, delivered in the Greek Chamber in August, 1917, by M. Venizelos, his followers, MM. Repoulis, Politis, and Kafandaris, and his opponents, MM. Stratos and Rallis. The Greek text ("*Agoreuseis, etc.*," Athens, 1917) and the English translation ("*A Report of Speeches, etc*," London, 1918), give them all, though the speech of M. Stratos only in summary. The French translation ("*Discours, etc., Traduction de M. Léon Maccas, autorisée par le Gouvernement Grec*," Paris, 1917) curiously omits both the Opposition speeches.

Skouloudis's *Apantesis*, 1917; *Apologia*, 1919; *Semeioseis*, 1921. The first of these publications is the ex-Premier's Reply to statements made in the Greek Chamber by M. Venizelos and others in August, 1917; the second is his Defence; the third is a collection of Notes concerning transactions in which he took part. All three are of the highest value for the eventful period of the Skouloudis Administration from November, 1915, to June, 1916.

Journal Officiel, 24–30 October, 1919, containing a full report of the Secret Committee of the French Chamber which sat from 16 June to 22 June, 1916.

Next in importance, though not inferior in historic interest, come some personal narratives, of which I have also availed myself, by leading French actors in the drama:

Du Fournet: "Souvenirs de Guerre d'un Amiral, 1914–1916." By Vice-Admiral Dartige du Fournet, Paris, 1920.

Sarrail: "Mon Commandement en Orient, 1916–1918." By General Sarrail, Paris, 1920.

Regnault: "La Conquête d'Athènes, Juin-Juillet, 1917." By General Regnault, Paris, 1920.

Deville: "L'Entente, la Grèce et la Bulgarie. Notes d'histoire et souvenirs." By Gabriel Deville, Paris, 1919. The author was French Minister at Athens till August, 1915, and the portions of his work which deal with his own experiences are worth consulting.

Jonnart: "M. Jonnart en Grèce et l'abdication de Constantin." By Raymond Recouly, Paris, 1918. Though not written by the High Commissioner himself, this account may be regarded as a semi-official record of his mission.

The only English publications of equal value, though of much more limited bearing upon the subject of this work, which have appeared so far are:

The Dardanelles Commission *Reports* (Cd. 8490; Cd. 8502; Cmd. 371), and the *Life of Lord Kitchener*, by Sir George Arthur, Vol. III, London, 1920.

Some trustworthy contributions to the study of these events have also been made by several unofficial narratives, to which the reader is referred for details on particular episodes. The absence of reference to certain other narratives is deliberate.

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GREECE AND THE ALLIES

1914–1922

INTRODUCTION

INGENIOUS scholars, surveying life from afar, are apt to interpret historical events as the outcome of impersonal forces which shape the course of nations unknown to themselves. This is an impressive theory, but it will not bear close scrutiny. Human nature everywhere responds to the influence of personality. In Greece this response is more marked than anywhere else. No people in the world has been so completely dominated by personal figures and suffered so grievously from their feuds, ever since the day when strife first parted Atreides, king of men, and god-like Achilles.

The outbreak of the European War found Greece under the sway of King Constantine and his Premier Eleutherios Venizelos; and her history during that troubled era inevitably centres round these two personalities.

By the triumphant conduct of the campaigns of 1912 and 1913, King Constantine had more than effaced the memory of his defeat in 1897. His victories ministered to the national lust for power and formed an earnest of the glory that was yet to come to Greece. Henceforth a halo of military romance—a thing especially dear to the hearts of men—shone about the head of Constantine; and his grateful country bestowed upon him the title of

Stratelates. In town mansions and village huts men's mouths were filled with his praise: one dwelt on his dauntless courage, another on his strategic genius, a third on his sympathetic recognition of the claims of the common soldier, whose hardships he shared, and for whose life he evinced a far greater solicitude than for his own.

But it was not only as a leader of armies that King Constantine appealed to the hearts of his countrymen. They loved to explain to strangers the reason of the name *Koumbaros* or "Gossip," by which they commonly called him. It was not so much, they would say, that he had stood godfather to the children born to his soldiers during the campaigns, but rather that his relations with the rank and file of the people at large were marked by the intimate interest of a personal companion.

In peace, as in war, he seemed a prince born to lead a democratic people. With his tall, virile figure, and a handsome face in which strength and dignity were happily blended with simplicity, he had a manner of address which was very engaging: his words, few, simple, soldier-like, produced a wonderful effect; they were the words of one who meant and felt what he said: they went straight to the hearer's heart because they came straight from the speaker's.

Qualities of a very different sort had enabled M. Venizelos to impose himself upon the mind of the Greek nation, and to make his name current in the Chancelleries of the world.

Having begun life as an obscure lawyer in Crete, he had risen through a series of political convulsions to high notability in his native island; and in 1909 a similar convulsion in Greece—brought about not without his collaboration—opened to him a wider sphere of activity. The moment was singularly opportune.

The discontent of the Greek people at the chronic mismanagement of their affairs had been quickened by the Turkish Revolution into something like despair. Bulgaria had exploited that upheaval by annexing Eastern Rumelia: Greece had failed to annex Crete, and ran the risk, if the Young Turks' experiment succeeded, of seeing the fulfil-

ment of all her national aspirations frustrated for ever. A group of military malcontents in touch with the Cretan leader translated the popular feeling into action: a revolt against the reign of venality and futility which had for so many years paralyzed every effort, which had sometimes sacrificed and always subordinated the interests of the nation to the interests of faction, and now left Greece a prey to Bulgarian and Ottoman ambition. The old politicians who were the cause of the ill obviously could not effect a cure. A new man was needed—a man free from the deadening influences of a corrupt past—a man daring enough to initiate a new course and tenacious enough to push on with inexorable purpose to the goal.

During the first period of his career, M. Venizelos had been a capable organizer of administrative departments no less than a clever manipulator of seditious movements. But he had mainly distinguished himself as a rebel against authority. And it was in the temper of a rebel that he came to Athens. Obstacles, however, external as well as internal, made a subversive enterprise impossible. With the quick adaptability of his nature, he turned into a guardian of established institutions: the foe of revolution and friend of reform. Supported by the Crown, he was able to lift his voice for a "Revisionist" above the angry sea of a multitude clamouring for a "Constituent Assembly."

All that was healthy in the political world rallied to the new man; and the new man did not disappoint the faith placed in him. Through the next two years he stood in every eye as the embodiment of constructive statesmanship. His Government had strength enough in the country to dispense with "graft." The result was a thorough overhauling of the State machinery. Self-distrust founded on past failures vanished. Greece seemed like an invalid healed and ready to face the future. It was a miraculous change for a nation whose political life hitherto had exhibited two traits seldom found combined: the levity of childhood and the indolence of age.

For this miracle the chief credit undoubtedly belonged

to M. Venizelos. He had brought to the task a brain better endowed than any associated with it. His initiative was indefatigable; his decision quick. Unlike most of his countrymen, he did not content himself with ideas without works. His subtlety in thinking did not serve him as a substitute for action. To these talents he added an eloquence of the kind which, to a Greek multitude, is irresistible, and a certain gift which does not always go with high intelligence, but, when it does, is worth all the arts of the most profound politician and accomplished orator put together. He understood, as it were instinctively, the character of every man he met, and dealt with him accordingly. This tact, coupled with a smile full of sweetness and apparent frankness, gave to his vivid personality a charm which only those could appraise who experienced it.

Abroad the progress of M. Venizelos excited almost as much interest as it did in Greece. The Greeks are extraordinarily sensitive to foreign opinion: a single good word in a Western newspaper raises a politician in public esteem more than a whole volume of home-made panegyric. M. Venizelos had not neglected this branch of his business; and from the outset every foreign journalist and diplomatist who came his way was made to feel his fascination: so that, even before leaving his native shores, the Cretan had become in the European firmament a star of the third or fourth magnitude. Reasons other than personal contributed to enlist Western opinion in his favour. Owing to her geographical situation, Greece depends for the fulfilment of her national aspirations and for her very existence on the Powers which command the Mediterranean. A fact so patent had never escaped the perception of any Greek politician. But no Greek politician had ever kept this fact more steadily in view, or put this obvious truth into more vehement language than M. Venizelos: "To tie Greece to the apron-strings of the Sea Powers," was his maxim. And the times were such that those Powers needed a Greek statesman whom they could trust to apply that maxim unflinchingly.

With the recovery of Greece synchronized, not by chance, the doom of Turkey: a sentence in which all the members of the Entente, starting from different points and pursuing different objects, concurred. The executioners were, naturally, the Balkan States. Russia began the work by bringing about an agreement between Bulgaria and Servia; England completed it by bringing Greece into the League. There ensued a local, which, in accordance with the old diplomatic prophecy, was soon to lead to the universal conflagration. Organized as she was, Greece succeeded better than anyone expected; and the national gratitude—the exuberant gratitude of a Southern people—went out to the two men directly responsible for that success: to King Constantine, whose brilliant generalship beat the enemy hosts; and to M. Venizelos, whose able statesmanship had prepared the field. Poets and pamphleteers vied with each other in expatiating on the wonders they had performed, to the honour and advantage of their country. In this ecstasy of popular adoration the spirit of the soldier and the spirit of the lawyer seemed to have met.

But the union was illusive and transient. Between these two men, so strangely flung together by destiny, there existed no link of sympathy; and propinquity only forced the growth of their mutual antagonism. The seeds of discord had already borne fruit upon the common ground of their Balkan exploits. Immediately after the defeat of Turkey a quarrel over the spoils arose among the victors. King Constantine, bearing in mind Bulgaria's long-cherished dream of hegemony, and persuaded that no sacrifices made by Greece and Servia could do more than defer a rupture, urged a Græco-Servian alliance against their truculent partner. He looked at the matter from a purely Greek standpoint and was anxious to secure the maximum of profit for his country. M. Venizelos, on the other hand, aware that the Western Powers, and particularly England, wanted a permanent Balkan coalition as a barrier against Germany in the East, and anxious to retain those Powers' favour, was prepared to concede

much for the sake of averting a rupture. Not until the Bulgars betrayed their intentions by actual aggressions in Macedonia did he withdraw his opposition to the alliance with Servia, which ushered in the Second Balkan War and led to the Peace of Bucharest. He yielded to the pressure of the circumstances brought to bear upon him; but the encounter represented no more than the preliminary crossing of swords between two strong antagonists.

CHAPTER I

FROM the moment when the rupture between Austria and Servia, in July, 1914, came to disturb the peace, Greece deliberately adopted an attitude of neutrality, with the proviso that she would go to Servia's assistance in case of a Bulgarian attack upon the latter. Such an attitude was considered to be in accordance with the Græco-Servian Alliance. For, although the Military Convention accompanying the Treaty contained a vague stipulation for mutual support in case of war between one of the allied States and "a third Power," the Treaty itself had as its sole object mutual defence against Bulgaria.[1]

In the opinion of M. Venizelos, her pact did not oblige Greece to go to Servia's assistance against Austria, but at most to mobilize 40,000 men.[2] Treaty obligations apart, neutrality was also imposed by practical considerations. It was to the interest of Greece—a matter of self-preservation—not to tolerate a Bulgarian attack on Servia calculated to upset the Balkan balance of power established by the Peace of Bucharest, and she was firmly determined, in concert with Rumania, to oppose such an attack with all her might. But as to Austria, M. Venizelos had to consider whether Greece could or could not offer her ally effective aid, and after consideration he decided that she

[1] See Art. 1 of the Military Convention. As this article originally stood, the promise of mutual support was expressly limited to the "case of war between Greece and Bulgaria or between Servia and Bulgaria." It was altered at the eleventh hour at Servia's request, and not without objections on the part of Greek military men, into a "case of war between one of the allied States and a third Power breaking out under the circumstances foreseen by the Græco-Servian Treaty of Alliance." But the only circumstances foreseen and provided for by that Treaty relate to war with Bulgaria, and it is a question whether any other interpretation would stand before a court of International Law, despite the "third Power" phrase in the Military Convention. All the documents are to be found in the *White Book*, Nos. 2, 3, 4, 6.

[2] See Art. 5 of the Military Convention.

should not proceed even to the mobilization of 40,000 men, for such a measure might provoke a Bulgarian mobilization and precipitate complications. For the rest, the attitude of Greece in face of Servia's war with Austria, M. Venizelos pointed out, corresponded absolutely with the attitude which Servia had taken up in face of Greece's recent crisis with Turkey.[1] On that occasion Greece had obtained from her ally merely moral support, the view taken being that the *casus fœderis* would arise only in the event of Bulgarian intervention.[2]

Accordingly, when the Servian Government asked if it could count on armed assistance from Greece, M. Streit, Minister for Foreign Affairs under M. Venizelos, answered that the Greek Government was convinced that it fully performed its duty as a friend and ally by adopting, until Bulgaria moved, a policy of most benevolent neutrality. The co-operation of Greece in the war with Austria, far from helping, would harm Servia; by becoming a belligerent Greece could only offer her ally forces negligible compared with the enemy's, while she would inevitably expose Salonica, the only port through which Servia could obtain war material, to an Austrian attack; and, moreover, she would weaken her army which, in the common interest, ought to be kept intact as a check on Bulgaria.[3]

A similar communication, emphasizing the decision to keep out of the conflict, and to intervene in concert with Rumania only should Bulgaria by intervening against Servia jeopardize the *status quo* established by the Bucharest Treaty—in which case the action of Greece would have a purely Balkan character—was made to the Greek Ministers abroad after a Council held in the Royal Palace under the presidency of the King.[4]

This policy brought King Constantine into sharp collision with one of the Central Powers, whose conceptions in regard to the Balkans had not yet been harmonized. Vienna readily acquiesced in the Greek Government's declaration that it could not permit Bulgaria to compromise

[1] *White Book*, Nos. 19, 20, 22.
[2] *White Book*, Nos. 11, 13, 14.
[3] *White Book*, No. 23.
[4] Streit to Greek Legations, Paris, London, Petersburg, Berlin, Vienna, Rome, Constantinople, Bucharest, Sofia, Nish. (No. 23,800.)

the Bucharest Treaty, and since by an eventual action against Bulgaria Greece would not quarrel with Austria, the Austrian Government, on its part, promised to abstain from manifesting any solidarity with Bulgaria in the event of a Græco-Bulgarian war.[1] Not so Berlin.

The German Emperor egotistically presumed to dictate the course which Greece should pursue, and on 31 July he invited King Constantine to join Germany, backing the invitation with every appeal to sentiment and interest he could think of. The memory of his father, who had been assassinated, made it impossible for Constantine to favour the Servian assassins; never would Greece have a better opportunity of emancipating herself, under the protection of the Central Powers, from the tutelage which Russia aimed at exercising over the Balkan Peninsula; if, contrary to the Kaiser's expectations, Greece took the other side, she would be exposed to a simultaneous attack from Italy, Bulgaria and Turkey, and by the same token all personal relations between him and Constantine would be broken for ever. He ended with the words: "I have spoken frankly, and I beg you to let me know your decision without delay and with the same absolute frankness."

He had nothing to complain of on that score. King Constantine on 2 August replied that, while it was not the policy of Greece to take an active part in the Austro-Servian conflict, it was equally impossible for her "to make common cause with the enemies of the Serbs and to fall upon them, since they are our allies. It seems to me that the interests of Greece demand an absolute neutrality and the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Balkans such as it has been created by the Treaty of Bucharest." He went on to add that Greece was determined, in concert with Rumania, to prevent Bulgaria from aggrandizing herself at the expense of Servia; if that happened, the balance in the Balkans would be upset and it would bring about the very Russian tutelage which the Kaiser feared. "This way of thinking," he concluded, "is shared by the whole of my people."

What the Kaiser thought of these opinions was summed up in one word on the margin, "Rubbish." This, however, was not meant for his brother-in-law's ears. To him he

[1] *Ibid.*

used less terse language. On 4 August he informed King Constantine through the Greek Minister in Berlin that an alliance had that day been concluded between Germany and Turkey, that Bulgaria and Rumania were similarly ranging themselves on Germany's side, and that the German men-of-war in the Mediterranean were going to join the Turkish fleet in order to act together. Thus all the Balkan States were siding with Germany in the struggle against Slavism. Would Greece alone stand out? His Imperial Majesty appealed to King Constantine as a comrade, as a German Field Marshal of whom the German Army was proud, as a brother-in-law; he reminded him that it was thanks to his support that Greece was allowed to retain Cavalla; he begged him to mobilize his army, place himself by the Kaiser's side and march hand in hand against the common enemy—Slavism. He made this urgent appeal for the last time, convinced that the King of Greece would respond to it. If not, all would be over between the two countries—this being a slightly attenuated version of another marginal note: "I will treat Greece as an enemy if she does not adhere at once."

King Constantine's answer was tactful but final: His personal sympathies and his political opinions, he said, were on the Kaiser's side. But alas! that which the Kaiser asked him to do was completely out of the question. Greece could not under any conceivable circumstances side against the Entente: the Mediterranean was at the mercy of the united French and British fleets, which could destroy the Greek marine, both royal and mercantile, take the Greek islands, and wipe Greece off the map. Things being so, neutrality, he declared, was the only policy for Greece, and he ended up by meeting the Kaiser's threat with a counter-threat, none the less pointed for being veiled under the guise of an "assurance not to touch his friends among my neighbours (i.e. Bulgaria and Turkey) as long as they do not touch our local Balkan interests."[1]

[1] Part of the correspondence is to be found in *Die deutschen Dokumente zum Kriegsausbruch*, by Count Mongelas and Prof. Walter Schüking; part in the *White Book*, Nos. 24 and 26. As much acrimonious discussion has arisen over King Constantine's last dispatch, it is worth while noting the circumstances under which it was sent. Vice-Admiral Mark Kerr, Chief of the British Naval

Germany did not immediately resign herself to this rebuff. The Kaiser's Government thought King Constantine's attachment to neutrality reasonable—for the present; but at the same time urged Greece to enter as soon as possible into a secret understanding with Bulgaria and Turkey for eventual action against Servia, describing the latter country as the bear's skin of which it would be a good stroke of business for Greece to secure a share. The German Minister at Athens, better acquainted with Greek views and feelings, took a less naïve line. He did not want Greece to attack her ally, but was content to advise that she should free herself from the ties that bound her to Servia, and in the event of Bulgarian aggression just leave her ally in the lurch. But, if he went less far than his chief in one direction, he went farther in another, threatening, should Greece move on Servia's behalf, to ask for his passport. This threat, like all the others, failed to move the Athens Government;[1] and, unable to gain Greece as an ally, Germany was henceforth glad enough not to have her as an enemy.

So far all those responsible for the policy of Greece appeared to be unanimous in the decision not to be drawn prematurely into the European cataclysm, but to reserve her forces for the defence of the Balkan equilibrium. Under this apparent unanimity, however, lay divergent tendencies.

King Constantine, a practical soldier, estimated that the European War would be of long duration and doubtful issue: in this battle of giants he saw no profit for pygmies, but only perils. At the same time, he did not forget that Greece had in Bulgaria and Turkey two embittered enemies

Mission in Greece, relates how the King brought the Kaiser's telegram and read it to him: "He was indignant at the interference in his country's affairs. However, to stop such telegrams coming in daily, he determined to send on this occasion a sympathetic answer." (See *The Times*, 9 Dec., 1920.) The communication, therefore, was no secret from the British Government. Nor was it from M. Venizelos; for the King's dispatch is but a summary of an identical declaration made by M. Venizelos's Government itself to the German Government: Streit to Greek Legation, Berlin, 26 July/8 Aug., 1914. Though omitted from the *White Book*, this document may now be read in the *Balkan Review*, Dec., 1920, pp. 381–3.

[1] *White Book*, Nos. 28, 29, 30.

who would most probably try to fish in the troubled waters. If they did so, he was prepared to fight; but to fight with a definite objective and on a definite military plan which took into account the elements of time, place, and resources.

The King's standpoint was shared by most Greek statesmen and soldiers of note: they all, in varying degrees, stood for neutrality, with possible intervention on the side of the Entente at some favourable moment. But it did not commend itself to his Premier. Caution was foreign to M. Venizelos's ambitious and adventurous temperament. Military considerations had little meaning for his civilian mind. Taking the speedy victory of the Entente as a foregone conclusion, and imbued with a sort of mystical faith in his own prophetic insight and star, he looked upon the European War as an occasion for Imperialist aggrandizement which he felt that Greece ought to grasp without an instant's delay.

It was not long before the underlying divergence came to the surface.

In the morning of 18 August, at a full Cabinet Meeting, M. Streit mentioned that the Russian Minister had privately referred to the possibility of Greece sending 150,000 men to fight with Servia against the Austrians on the Danube —far away from the Greek Army's natural base in Macedonia. On hearing this M. Venizelos impulsively declared that he was ready to place all the Greek forces at the disposal of the Entente Powers in accordance with their invitation. M. Streit remonstrated that there had been no "invitation," but at most a sounding from one of the Entente Ministers, which Greece should meet with a counter-sounding, in order to learn to what extent the suggestion was serious. Further, he objected that, before Greece committed herself, it was necessary to find out where she would be expected to fight, the conditions under which she would fight, and the compensations which she would receive in the event of victory. As a last resort he proposed to adjourn the discussion until the afternoon. But M. Venizelos answered that there was no time to lose: the War would be over in three weeks.[1] Whereupon M.

[1] My authority for this glimpse behind the scenes is M. Streit himself.

Streit resigned, and M. Venizelos offered to the Entente Ministers the adhesion of Greece forthwith.

The terms in which this offer was couched have never been divulged; but from the French Minister's descriptions of it as made "*à titre gracieux*" and "*sans conditions*,"[1] it seems to have been unconditional and unqualified. On the other hand, M. Venizelos at a later period explained that he had offered to place Greece at the disposal of the Entente Powers, if Turkey went to war with them.[2] And it is not improbable that the primary objective in his mind was Turkey, who still refused to relinquish her claims to the islands conquered by the Greeks in 1912, and had just strengthened her navy with two German units, the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*. However that may be, King Constantine seconded the offer, expressing himself quite willing to join the Entente there and then with the whole of his army, but stipulating, on the advice of the General Staff, that the Greek forces should not be moved to any place where they could not, if need arose, operate against Bulgaria.

The King of England telegraphed to the King of Greece, thanking him for the proposal, which, he said, his Government would consider. The French and Russian Governments expressed lively satisfaction, France, however, adding: "For the moment we judge that Greece must use all her efforts to make Turkey observe her promised neutrality, and to avoid anything that might lead the Turkish Government to abandon its neutrality." The British answer, when it came at last, was to the same effect: England wished by all means to avoid a collision with Turkey and advised that Greece also should avoid a collision. She only suggested for the present an understanding between the Staffs with a view to eventual action.

This suggestion was apparently a concession to Mr. Winston Churchill, who just then had formed the opinion that Turkey would join the Central Powers, and had arranged with Lord Kitchener that two officers of the Admiralty should meet two officers of the War Office to work out a plan for the seizure, by means of a Greek army, of the

[1] Deville, pp. 119, 128.
[2] *Orations*, pp. 93–4.

Gallipoli Peninsula, with a view to admitting a British fleet to the Sea of Marmara.[1] But it no way affected the British Government's policy. The utmost that England and France were prepared to do in order to meet the offer of Greece, and that only if she were attacked, was to prevent the Turkish fleet from coming out of the Dardanelles; France also holding out some hope of financial assistance, but none of war material on an adequate scale.[2]

Such a reception of his advances was not very flattering to M. Venizelos—it made him look foolish in the eyes of those who had pleaded against precipitancy; and he took the earliest opportunity to vent his ill-humour. King Constantine, in a reply to the British Admiralty drafted with Vice-Admiral Mark Kerr, stated that he would not fight Turkey unless attacked by her—a statement in strict consonance with the wishes of the Entente Powers at the time. But M. Venizelos objected. After his own declarations to the Entente Ministers, and after the exchange of telegrams with the King of England, he told his sovereign he did not consider this reply possible. Turkey was their enemy, and was it wise for them to reject a chance of fighting her with many and powerful allies, so that they might eventually have to fight her single-handed?[3]

Thus M. Venizelos argued, in the face of express evidence that those allies did not desire the immediate participation of Greece in a war against Turkey—because, anxious above all things to establish close contact with them, he wanted the offer to remain open: "a promise that, should at any time the Powers consider us useful in a war against Turkey . . . we would be at their disposal."[4] And he professed himself unable to understand how a course which appeared so clear to him could possibly be obscure to others. But he had a theory—a theory which served him henceforward as a stock explanation of every difference of opinion, and in which the political was skilfully mixed

[1] *Dardanelles Commission. Supplement to First Report*, par. 45.
[2] Gennadius, London, 20 Aug./2 Sept.; 21 Aug./3 Sept.; 23 Aug./5 Sept.; Romanos, Paris, 16/29 Aug., 1914.
[3] *White Book*, No. 31.
[4] See *Orations*, p. 103.

with the personal factor. According to this theory, when face to face with M. Venizelos, the King seldom failed to be convinced; but as soon as M. Venizelos withdrew, he changed his mind. This happened not once, but many times.[1] We have here a question of psychology which cannot be casually dismissed. M. Venizelos's persuasive powers are notorious, and it is highly probable that King Constantine underwent the fascination which this man had for others. But behind it all, according to the Venizelist theory, lurked another element:

"What, I think, confuses things and begets in the mind of your Majesty and of M. Streit tendencies opposed to those supported by me, is the wish not to displease Germany by undertaking a war against Turkey in co-operation with Powers hostile to her." Although M. Streit had laid down his portfolio, he continued to be consulted by the King, with the result, M. Venizelos complained, that the difference of opinions between the ex-Minister for Foreign Affairs and himself was fast developing into a divergence of courses between the Crown and the Cabinet: such a state of things was obviously undesirable, and M. Venizelos, "in order to facilitate the restoration of full harmony between the Crown and its responsible advisers," offered his resignation.[2]

M. Venizelos did not resign after all. But his letter marks an epoch none the less. At first, as we have seen, the avowed policy of the Premier, of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and of the King was the same. The difference which now emerges is that M. Venizelos desired to throw Greece into the War immediately, without conditions and without any invitation from the Entente, while the King and M. Streit were more circumspect. M. Venizelos chose to interpret their circumspection as prompted by regard for Germany, and did not hesitate to convey this view to Entente quarters. It was, perhaps, a plausible insinuation, since the King had a German wife and M. Streit was of German descent. But, as a matter of fact, at the moment when it was made, King Constantine voluntarily presented to the British Admiralty through Admiral Kerr the plans for the taking of the Dardanelles which his Staff had

[1] *Ibid*, pp. 41–2, 98.
[2] *White Book*, No. 31

elaborated, and for a long time afterwards continued to supply the British Government, through the same channel, with information from his secret service.[1]

[1] See the Admiral's statements in the *Weekly Dispatch*, 21 Nov., and in *The Times*, 9 Dec., 1920. Though the plans in question were not used, they were among the very few sources of reliable information with which Sir Ian Hamilton left England to take up the command of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.—*Dardanelles Commission, Final Report*, par. 17.

CHAPTER II

BEFORE proceeding any further with the development of the position in Greece, it will be well to cast a glance on the attitudes maintained by the other Balkan States and the views entertained towards them by the Entente Powers. One must know all the possible combinations on the Balkan chess-board before one can profitably study or estimate the real place of the Greek pawn.

Bulgaria proclaimed her firm intention to remain neutral; but, to judge from the Greek diplomatic representatives' reports, there was every indication that she only awaited a favourable opportunity, such as some brilliant military success of the Central Powers, in order to invade Servia without risk. Meanwhile, well-armed irregular bands, equipped by the Bulgarian Government and commanded by Bulgarian officers "on furlough," made their appearance on the Servian frontier, and the Bulgarian Press daily grew more hostile in its tone.[1]

Alarmed by these symptoms, the Greek General Staff renewed the efforts which it had been making since the beginning of 1914, to concert plans with the Servian military authorities for common action in accordance with their alliance, and asked the Servian Minister of War if, in case Bulgaria ordered a general mobilization, Servia would be disposed to bring part of her forces against her, so as to prevent the concentration of the Bulgarian army and give the Greek army time to mobilize. The reply was that, if Bulgaria did order mobilization, the Serbs were obliged to turn against her with all their available forces. Only, as Austria had just started an offensive, nobody could know how many forces they would have available—perhaps they could face the situation with the 25,000 or 30,000 men in the new provinces; but, in

[1] Naoum, Sofia, 11, 20 Aug. (O. S.); Alexandropoulos, Nish, 19 July, 19 Aug. (O. S.), 1914.

any case, it did not seem that Bulgaria meant to mobilize, or, if she did, it would be against Turkey. A little later, in answer to another Greek step, M. Passitch, the Servian Premier, after a conference with the military chiefs, stated that, as long as there was no imminent danger from Bulgaria, Servia could not draw troops from the Austrian frontier, because of her engagements towards the Entente, and that, should the danger become imminent, Servia would have to consult first the Entente.[1] By Entente, he meant especially Russia, for M. Sazonow had already told the Greek Minister at Petrograd that it was all-important that the Servian army should be left free to devote its whole strength against the Austrians.[2]

Rumania, on whose co-operation Greece counted for restraining Bulgaria and preserving the balance established by the Treaty of Bucharest, maintained an equivocal attitude: both belligerent groups courted her, and it was as yet uncertain which would prevail.[3] For the present Rumanian diplomacy was directed to the formation of a Balkan *bloc* of neutrality—between Rumania, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Greece—which might enable those four States to remain at peace with each other and the whole world, exempt from outside interference. The first step to the realization of this idea, the Rumanian Government considered, was a settlement of the differences between Greece and Turkey; and, in compliance with its invitation, both States sent their plenipotentiaries to Bucharest.

The only result of this mission was to enlighten the Hellenic Government on Turkey's real attitude. At the very first sitting, the Turkish delegate, Talaat Bey, in answer to a remark that the best thing for the Balkan States would be to keep out of the general conflagration, blurted out: "But Turkey is no longer free as to her movements"—an avowal of the Germano-Turkish alliance which the Greeks already knew from the Kaiser's own indiscretions. After that meeting, in a conversation with the Rumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs, which that gentleman reported to the Greeks, Talaat said that, in his opinion, Greece could ignore her Servian alliance, for,

[1] Alexandropoulos, Nish, 31 July, 19, 26 Aug. (O.S.) 1914.
[2] Dragoumis, Petersburg, 20 Aug. (O.S.), 1914.
[3] Politis, Bucharest, 27 Aug. (O.S.), 1914.

as things stood, she might find herself at war, not only with Bulgaria, but also with Turkey—a contingency not foreseen when that alliance was made. From these utterances the Greeks derived a clear impression that Talaat acted on a plan drawn up in Berlin.[1] For the rest, the despatch of the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* to Constantinople, followed by the continued arrival of German officers and sailors for the Ottoman Navy, spoke for themselves. M. Sazonow shared the Greek conviction that Turkey had made up her mind, and that no amount of concessions would avail: "It is," he said to the Greek Minister at Petrograd, "an abscess which must burst."[2] The Greeks had even reason to suspect that Turkey was secretly negotiating an agreement with Bulgaria, and on this point also the information of the Russian Government confirmed theirs.[3]

It was his intimate knowledge of the Balkan situation that had inspired King Constantine's proposal to the Entente Powers in August for common action against Turkey, qualified with the stipulation of holding Bulgaria in check. The proposal took cognizance of Balkan difficulties and might perhaps have solved them, had it been accepted: an advance of the Greek army on Thrace, combined with a naval attack by the British Fleet, early in September, might have settled Turkey, secured Bulgaria's neutrality, if not indeed her co-operation, or forced her into a premature declaration of hostility, and decided Rumania to throw in her lot with us.

But the Entente Powers were not yet ripe for action against Turkey: they were still playing—with what degree of seriousness is a delicate question—for the neutrality of Turkey, and for that Greek neutrality was necessary. As to Bulgaria, our diplomacy harboured a different project: the reconstruction of the Balkan League of 1912 in our favour, on the basis of territorial concessions to be made to Bulgaria by Servia and Greece, who were to be compensated by dividing Albania between them. Greece also had from England an alternative suggestion—expansion in Asia Minor: a vague and

[1] Politis, Bucharest, 15 Aug. (O.S.), 1914.
[2] Dragoumis, Petersburg, 17 Aug. (O.S.), 1914.
[3] Dragoumis, *ibid.*

unofficial hint, destined to assume imposing dimensions later on. At this stage, however, the whole project lacked precise outline. One plan of the reconstructed League included Rumania—who also was to make concessions to Bulgaria and to receive compensations at the expense of Austria; and the League was to be brought into the field on the side of the Entente. Another plan had less ambitious aims: Servia and Greece by conciliating Bulgaria were to prevent a combination of Rumania, Bulgaria, and Turkey, or of Bulgaria and Turkey, on the side of the Central Powers. The more sanguine plan was especially cherished by Great Britain; the other by Russia, who feared a Rumano-Bulgaro-Turkish combination against her. But the key-stone in both was Bulgaria, whose co-operation, or at least neutrality, was to be purchased at the cost of Servia and Greece.[1] Meanwhile, the less serious the Entente Powers' hopes for Turkey's neutrality, the more lively their anxiety must have been about Bulgaria's attitude; and it is not improbable that in repelling King Constantine's offer, they were actuated not so much by the wish to avoid Turkish hostility—the reason given—as by the fear lest the stipulation which accompanied his offer, if accepted, should provoke Bulgaria.

Highly speculative as this project was, it might have materialized if Serbs and Greeks were willing to pay the price. But neither Serbs nor Greeks would think of such a thing. At the mere report that they were about to be asked to cede Cavalla, the Greeks went mad, and M. Venizelos himself, though he favoured the reconstruction of the Balkan League, loudly threatened, if the demand was formulated, to resign. Whereupon, his consternation having been transmitted to the Entente capitals, he received an assurance that no demand of the sort would be made[2]—for the present.

[1] Gennadius, London, 8, 10, 15, 23 Aug.; Romanos, Paris, 31 July, 16 Aug.; Dragoumis, Petersburg, 31 July, 12, 20 Aug.; Naoum, Sofia, 31 July, 11, 20, 23 Aug.; Alexandropoulos, Nish, 18 Aug.; Papadiamantopoulos, Bucharest, 25 July (O.S.), 1914.

[2] Venizelos to Greek Legations, Petersburg, Bordeaux, London, 2 Sept. (O.S.), 1914.

CHAPTER III

TWO tasks now lay before the Allies in the East: to help Servia, and to attack Turkey, who had entered the War on 31 October. Both enterprises were "under consideration"—which means that the Entente Cabinets were busy discussing both and unable to decide on either. Distracted by conflicting aims and hampered by inadequate resources, they could not act except tentatively and in an experimental fashion.

At the beginning of November the representatives of France, England, and Russia at Athens collectively seconded a Servian appeal for assistance to M. Venizelos, which the Greek Premier met with a flat refusal. He gave his reasons: such action, he said, would infallibly expose Greece to aggression from Bulgaria, and it was more than probable that an automatic agreement between Bulgaria and Turkey might engage the Greek army in a struggle with the forces of three Powers at once. Even if the attack came from Bulgaria alone, he added, the Greek army needed three weeks to concentrate at Salonica and another month to reach the theatre of the Austro-Servian conflict, and in that interval the Bulgarian army, invading Servia, would render impossible all contact between the Greek and Servian armies. The Entente Ministers endeavoured to overcome these objections by assuring M. Venizelos that Bulgaria could not possibly range herself against Russia, France, and England; and besides, they said, their Governments could ask Rumania to guarantee Bulgarian neutrality. M. Venizelos replied that, if the co-operation of Bulgaria with Rumania and Greece were secured, then the Greeks could safely assist Servia in an effective manner; or the next best thing might be an undertaking by Rumania to guarantee the neutrality of Bulgaria; and he proceeded to ascertain the Rumanian Government's views on the subject. He learnt that, in

answer to a question put to the Rumanian Premier by the Entente Ministers at Bucharest, "whether he would undertake to guarantee the neutrality of Bulgaria towards Greece if the latter Power sent succour to the Serbs," M. Bratiano, while professing the greatest goodwill towards Greece and the Entente, declined to give any such undertaking.[1] Add another important fact to which the Greek Government had its attention very earnestly drawn about this time—that not only Servia, but even Belgium, experienced the greatest difficulty in procuring from France the munitions and money necessary for continuing the struggle.[2]

In the circumstances, there was no alternative for M. Venizelos but to adopt the prudent attitude which on other occasions he was pleased to stigmatize as "pro-German." True, his refusal to move in November was hardly consistent with his eagerness to do so in August; but, taking into account his temperament, we must assume that he had made that rash *à titre gracieux* offer blindfold. Events had not borne out his predictions of a speedy victory, and, though his faith in the ultimate triumph of the Entente remained unshaken, he had come to realize that, for the present at any rate, it behoved Hellas to walk warily.[3]

Some ten weeks passed, and then (23 January, 1915) Sir Edward Grey again asked M. Venizelos for assistance to Servia in the common interest; as Austria and Germany seemed bent on crushing her, it was essential that all who could should lend her their support. If Greece ranged herself by Servia's side as her ally, the Entente Powers would willingly accord her very important territorial concessions on the Asia Minor Coast. The matter was

[1] Psycha to Venizelos, Bucharest, 23 Oct./6 Nov.; Venizelos to Greek Legations, London, Bordeaux, Petersburg, 24 Oct./7 Nov., 1914.

[2] Romanos, Bordeaux, 19 Nov., 1914.

[3] He explained, three years afterwards, that at the time of making his offer of 18 Aug., 1914, he bore in mind "the impossibility of going to Servia's assistance on account of the danger from Bulgaria." —*Orations*, p. 93. But precisely similar was the objection to going against Turkey without a guarantee of Bulgarian neutrality: only the Bulgars, in the one case, would have been on Greece's left flank and in the other on the right. The truth seems to be that the vision of M. Venizelos lacked the penetration which, in matters of this sort, can only come from long study and reflection.

urgent, for, were Servia crushed, though the ultimate defeat of Austria and Germany would not be thereby affected, there would during the War come about in the Balkans accomplished facts which would make it difficult or even impossible for either Servia or Greece to obtain afterwards arrangements as favourable as those actually in view. Conversely, the immediate participation of Greece and Rumania in the War would, by bringing about the defeat of Austria, secure the realization of Greek, Rumanian and Servian aspirations. To render such participation effective, it was desirable that Bulgaria should be assured that, if Servian and Greek aspirations elsewhere were realized, she would obtain satisfactory compensations in Macedonia, on condition that she came in or at least maintained a not malevolent neutrality. But the question of compensations affected chiefly Servia: all he asked of M. Venizelos on that point was not to oppose any concessions that Servia might be inclined to make to Bulgaria.

Whether this semi-official request amounted to a proposal or was merely in the nature of a suggestion is hard to determine. But M. Venizelos seems to have understood it in the latter sense, for in speaking of it he made use of the very informal adjective "absurd." No one, indeed, could seriously believe that Bulgaria would be induced to co-operate, or even to remain neutral, by the hypothetical and partial promises which Sir Edward Grey indicated; and with a potentially hostile Bulgaria in her flank Greece could not march to Servia's aid. So M. Venizelos, under the impulse of ambition, set his energetic brain to work, and within a few hours produced a scheme calculated to correct the "absurdity" of the British notion, to earn the gratitude of the Entente to himself, and an Asiatic Empire for his country. It was nothing less than a complete reversal of his former attitude: that Greece should not only withdraw her opposition to concessions on the part of Servia, but should voluntarily sacrifice Cavalla to the Bulgars, provided they joined the Allies forthwith. This scheme he embodied in a lengthy memorandum which he submitted to the King.

M. Venizelos recognized how painful a sacrifice the cession of Cavalla would be, and therefore he had to use very strong arguments to commend it to his Majesty. In the

first place, he emphasized the imperative need of helping Servia, since, should Servia be crushed, the Austro-German armies might be tempted to advance on Salonica, or Bulgaria might be invited to take possession of Servian Macedonia, in which case Greece would have either to let the Balkan balance of power go by the board, or, in accordance with her Treaty, go to Servia's assistance under much more disadvantageous conditions. In the second place, he argued that the sacrifice of Cavalla was well worth making, since Greece would eventually receive in Asia Minor compensations which would render her greater and more powerful than the most sanguine Greek could even have dreamt a few years before; and in Macedonia itself the loss of Cavalla could be partially compensated for by a rectification of frontiers involving the acquisition from Servia of the Doiran-Ghevgheli district.

In the event of Bulgaria accepting Cavalla and the Servian concessions as the price of her alliance, M. Venizelos argued that the outcome would be a reconstructed League of the Balkan States which would not only ensure them against defeat, but would materially contribute to the victory of the Entente Powers: even the ideal of a lasting Balkan Federation might be realized by a racial readjustment through an interchange of populations. Should Bulgarian greed prove impervious, Greece must secure the co-operation of Rumania, without which it would be too risky for her to move.[1]

Sacrifices of territory, in King Constantine's opinion, were out of the question; but he thought that, if Rumania agreed to co-operate, it might be possible for Greece to go to Servia's assistance, as in that case Bulgaria could perhaps be held in check by Rumanian and Greek forces left along her northern and southern frontiers. The Bucharest Government was accordingly sounded, and returned an answer too evasive to justify reliance on its co-operation. So M. Venizelos fell back on the scheme of buying Bulgarian co-operation by the cession of Cavalla, and submitted a second memorandum to the King.

If the first of these documents was remarkable for its optimism, the second might justly be described as a

[1] First Memorandum, 11/24 Jan., in the *Nea Hellas*, 21 March (O.S.), 1915.

masterpiece of faith pure and undefiled by any contact with sordid facts. Its theme is the magnitude of the compensations which Greece might expect in return for her entry into the War: "I have a feeling," says the author, "that the concessions in Asia Minor suggested by Sir Edward Grey can, especially if we submit to sacrifices to the Bulgars, assume such dimensions as to double the size of Greece. I believe that if we demanded"—he specifies in detail a vast portion of Western Asia Minor—"our demand would probably be granted." He calculated that the surface of this territory exceeds 125,000 (the figure was soon raised to 140,000) square kilometres, while the area to be ceded in Macedonia did not exceed 2,000 square kilometres, and that loss would be further halved by the acquisition from Servia of the Doiran-Ghevgheli district, which covered some 1,000 square kilometres. Thus, in point of territory, Greece would be giving up a hundred and fortieth part of what she would be getting. In point of population also Greece would be receiving twenty-five times as much as she would be sacrificing—an accretion of 800,000 as against a loss of 30,000 souls; and that loss could be obviated by obliging Bulgaria to buy up the property of the Cavalla Greeks, who, he had no doubt, would gladly emigrate *en masse* to Asia Minor, to reinforce the Greek element there. How was it possible to hesitate about seizing such an opportunity—an opportunity for the creation of a Greece powerful on land and supreme in the Ægean Sea—"an opportunity verily presented to us by Divine Providence for the realization of our most audacious national ideals"—presented to-day and never likely to occur again?

M. Venizelos did not doubt but that a transaction which appeared so desirable and feasible to him must appear equally desirable and feasible to others: and great was his surprise to find that such was by no means the case. The General Staff, he complained, "seem, strangely, not attracted strongly by these views." And the same might be said of everyone who judged, not by the glow of prophetic insight, but by a cold examination of facts. When Asia Minor was first mentioned to the Greek Minister in London, that shrewd diplomat answered: "Greece would not commit such a folly, for the day she set foot in

Asia Minor she would find herself up against Great Powers as well as against Turkey."[1] At Athens to this objection were added others not less weighty. The General Staff pointed out that Greece had neither the men nor the money required for the permanent occupation and efficient administration of that distant region. They feared both the difficulties of defending those Turkish territories in Asia and the danger of future attack from Bulgaria in Europe. In short, they held that Greece by embarking on what they aptly termed a Colonial policy would be undertaking responsibilities wholly incommensurate with her resources.[2]

Dangers and difficulties! cried M. Venizelos: can you allow such things to stand in the way of national ideals? And he proceeded to demolish the obstructions: the administrative success achieved in Macedonia proved that the resources of Greece were equal to fresh responsibilities; the Turks of Asia Minor—after the total disappearance of the Ottoman Empire, which he deemed inevitable—would become contented and law-abiding Greek subjects, and at all events the local Greek population would in a very short space of time supply all the forces needed to maintain order in Asia, leaving the main Greek army free for the defence of the European frontiers. During that brief period of transition, he thought it easy to form an agreement with the Entente Powers for military assistance against a Bulgarian attack, or, even without the Entente, "should the Bulgars be so demented by the Lord as to attempt aggression, I have not the slightest doubt that Servia, moved by her treaty obligations, her interests, and her gratitude for our present aid, would again co-operate with us to humble Bulgarian insolence."[3]

Thus at a moment's notice M. Venizelos became an impassioned advocate of the policy of which he had hitherto been an impassioned opponent, and he would have us believe that the King, persuaded by his eloquence, authorised him to carry out his new plan. Be that as it may, M. Venizelos did not avail himself of this permission.

[1] Gennadius, London, 10 Aug. (O.S.), 1914.
[2] *Orations*, p. 43.
[3] Second Memorandum, 17/30 Jan., in the *Nea Hellas*, 22 March (O.S.), 1915.

For almost simultaneously came the news of a Bulgarian loan contracted in the Austro-German market—an event which made him abandon all hopes of conciliating Bulgaria and profiting by the British overture. During the months when the revival of the Balkan League was perhaps still practicable, he had combated the only expedient which might have given it a chance of realization: by the time he became a convert, it was too late.

The Balkan situation remained as it was before Sir Edward Grey's suggestion: so much so that, when a few days later the Entente Powers again asked Greece to go to Servia's relief, offering her as security against the Bulgarian danger to transport to Macedonia a French and a British division, M. Venizelos, considering such security insufficient, again refused;[1] a refusal which, justified though it was, gave great umbrage.[2]

While the Greek Premier was going through these mental evolutions, the scene of Entente activity shifted: and his flexible mind perforce veered in a new direction.

As far back as 3 November, the outer forts of the Dardanelles had been subjected to a brief bombardment with the object of testing the range of their guns; and by 25 November the idea of a serious attack on the Straits had engaged the attention of the British War Council. But no decision was arrived at until January, when Russia, hard pressed by the Turks on the Caucasus, begged for a demonstration against them in some other quarter. In compliance with this appeal, the British War Council then decided to attempt to force the Dardanelles by means of the Navy alone. After the failure of the naval attack of 19 February, however, it was realized that the operations would have to be supplemented by military action;[3] and as the magnitude of the enterprise became clearer and the troops at the disposal of England and France were very limited, the need of securing Balkan allies became more obvious.

From the first greater importance was attached to Bulgarian co-operation than to Greek. Even the grant of

[1] See his own statement in the *Nea Hellas*, 22 March (O.S.), 1915.
[2] Dragoumis, Petrograd, 16 Feb., 1915.
[3] Dardanelles Commission, First Report, pp. 14–5, 31–3; Final Report, pp. 6–8.

a loan to Sofia by the Central Powers appears to have produced little or no impression upon those concerned. Long afterwards it was admitted as a self-evident proposition that belligerents do not lend to neutrals without being satisfied that their money will not be used against themselves. But at the time, after a momentary shock, the Entente Governments were deluded, either by Bulgarian diplomacy or by their own wishes, into the belief that "Bulgaria would not commit the stupidity to refuse the advantages offered."[1] Nor, in thus reckoning on enlightened bad faith, were they alone. M. Venizelos, who a moment before had declared that the loan had opened his eyes to the fact "that Bulgaria was definitely committed to the Central Powers," now felt quite sure that, "notwithstanding the loan, Bulgaria was capable of betraying her then friends and turning towards those who promised her greater profits."[2] Anxious, therefore, to forestall the Bulgars, and concerned by the thought that he had been obliged on three occasions to decline requests from the Entente, he spontaneously proposed, on 1 March, to offer three Greek divisions for the Dardanelles expedition, stating that this proposal was made with King Constantine's assent.[3]

As a matter of fact, neither the King nor his General Staff approved of M. Venizelos's strategy. Having made a systematic study of the Dardanelles problem, they judged that the Allies' enterprise, even under the most skilful handling, presented but few chances, and those chances had been discounted in advance by utter want of skilful handling: the bombardment of the Straits in the previous November had given the Turks warning of the blow and ample time to prepare against it—and the Turks were no longer the happy-go-lucky fellows upon whose inefficiency one might formerly have counted; they now mounted guard over the gates of their capital equipped with German guns and commanded by German officers. The enterprise was likely to become more hazardous still by arousing the jealousy of the Bulgars. If, therefore, Greece did join in, besides all the other risks, she would expose herself to a

[1] Deville, pp. 163, 215.
[2] *Orations*, pp. 103, 104.
[3] Dardanelles Commission, Supplement to First Report, p. 3.

Bulgarian assault; and with a considerable portion of her forces engaged in Gallipoli, and no prospect either of Servian or of Rumanian assistance, how was she to face that assault?

The King's disapproval was known to no one better than to M. Venizelos himself. But, for all that, he felt entitled to tell the British Minister at Athens that he had the King's assent. Here is his own explanation: "The King was opposed to the enterprise. I sought another interview in order to speak to him again on the subject, and took with me a third memorandum"—which has never been published, and cannot yet be published. "I asked him to let me read it to him, for in it were set forth fully all the arguments which, in my opinion, imposed co-operation. I read it. I saw that the King became agitated. For—I must do him that justice—he rarely remained unconvinced when face to face with me. So profound was the emotion with which I spoke, so powerful were the arguments which I used that the King, greatly moved, said to me: 'Well, then, in the name of God.' That is, he assented."[1]

However, the General Staff remained unconvinced; and Colonel Metaxas, a brilliant soldier, then Acting-Chief of the Staff, resigned as a protest against military proposals being made by a Greek minister to other countries without previous consultation with the military experts of his own. M. Venizelos, on his part, was indignant that mere soldiers should presume to meddle with the plans of statesmen; his view being that the Staff's business was simply to carry out the policy of the Government. Nevertheless, impressed by this resignation, he suggested the meeting of a Crown Council composed of all the ex-Premiers, that their opinions might be heard. The Council met on 3 March and again on 5 March. At the first sitting M. Venizelos admitted that the objections of the military experts, without altering his own convictions, might still inspire doubt as to which policy was preferable: neutrality or intervention. Should the policy of neutrality be adopted, it must be carried on by a new Cabinet, to which he would accord his parliamentary support. At the second sitting he endeavoured to remove the objections of the military experts by reducing his proposed contribution to the

[1] *Orations*, pp. 105–6.

Gallipoli expedition from three divisions to one, which should be replaced in the existing cadres by a division of reserves, so as to leave the Greek Army practically intact against a possible attack from Bulgaria. And having thus modified the conditions of intervention, he refused to entertain any other policy or to support a Cabinet pledged to neutrality.[1]

Momentarily infected by the Cretan's enthusiasm, nearly all present urged upon the King the acceptance of his proposal; one of them, M. Rallis, even going so far as to say: "Sire, pray consider that you have a Government clothed with the full confidence of the nation. Let it carry out its policy. Else, you will incur undue responsibility." The King's answer was: "If you wish it, I will abdicate."[2] He would rather give up his crown than assume the responsibility of sanctioning a policy which his whole military training and experience told him was insane and suicidal: how justly, the event soon showed. The losses of men and ships which Gallipoli cost far exceeded the whole of Greece's military and naval resources; and if that cost proved more than embarrassing to England and France, it would have literally ruined Greece. M. Rallis and the other ex-Premiers in less than a fortnight gratefully recognised the justness of the King's opposition to their views,[3] and thenceforth parted company with M. Venizelos.

Meanwhile M. Venizelos hastened from the Palace to the British Legation, and, "in order to save time till he could make an official *démarche*," he made to the Entente Ministers there assembled a semi-official communication to this effect: "Following the natural evolution of its policy of solidarity with the Entente Powers, the Royal Government has judged that the Dardanelles operations afford it a favourable occasion to translate its sentiments into deeds by abandoning its neutrality and offering its co-operation in that enterprise with the whole of its Fleet and one division of its army." All this, "though the King

[1] See Extracts from the Crown Council Minutes, in the *Balkan Review*, Dec., 1920, pp. 384–5, which supplement M. Venizelos's very meagre account of these proceedings in *Orations*, pp. 107–8.

[2] *Orations*, pp. 266–7.

[3] *Ibid*, pp. 267–8.

has not yet given his adhesion."[1] His hurry arose from the belief that the Allies would reach Constantinople in a few days.

But the General Staff still remained unconvinced. Yes, they said, one division to begin with; but what if the Allies get stuck in the Straits, as we believe they will be, and call upon us for more? And, once we join them, how can we refuse to supply their needs? We shall be incurring unlimited liabilities. So the King, who had full confidence in his military advisers, and who could not bring himself to look upon the Gallipoli adventure as a "serious enterprise,"[2] declined his adhesion to M. Venizelos's plan; and M. Venizelos resigned in wrath (6 March).

Then came the Entente replies to his communication; from which it appeared that, as in August, 1914, so now the impetuous Cretan ran ahead of the Powers: that, whilst he was inveighing against everyone who would not let Greece co-operate with them, they had not yet even agreed as to whether they desired her co-operation.

England regarded the communication as a merely preliminary and preparatory step, and waited for a definite proposal after the King's decision, when she would consult with her allies. France and Russia insisted on the impossibility of Greece limiting her participation to a war against Turkey alone: to be an effective partner of the Entente, Greece must be prepared to fight Austria and Germany also. France added that the question of the participation of Greece in the Dardanelles enterprise could not be a useful subject of discussion between the Allies until a definite decision by the Greek Government was taken. Russia did not even envisage the usefulness of such a discussion. M. Sazonow pointedly declared that he did not consider Greek co-operation in the Dardanelles at all necessary, that the question of the Straits and of Constantinople ought to be settled by the Entente Powers alone without the intervention of third parties, and that Russia did not desire the entry of a Greek army into Constantinople, though she had no objection to its operating against Smyrna or elsewhere.[3]

[1] Venizelos to Greek Legations, London, Paris, Petrograd, 20 Feb./5 March, 1915.

[2] *Orations*, p. 267.

[3] Gennadius, London, 21 Feb.; Sicilianos, Paris, 22 Feb.; Dragoumis, Petrograd, 22 Feb. (O.S.), 1915.

Some days later, it is true, M. Delcassé affirmed that he had overcome Russia's repugnance;[1] but, though it is probable that Russia, yielding to pressure, would have accepted the participation of Greek troops, she made no secret of her satisfaction at not having had to do so: "We heartily consent to your receiving large compensations in Asia Minor," said the Russian Minister at Athens, in the presence of his British colleague, to a high official of the Greek Ministry for Foreign Affairs. "But as to Constantinople, we prefer that you should not come there; it would afterwards be painful for you and disagreeable for everybody to turn you out."[2]

M. Venizelos knew these views perfectly well, and did not covet Constantinople: what he coveted, so far as material gains went, were the large compensations in Asia Minor.[3] There lay the chief objective of his strategy, and its net outcome was to widen the breach between him and those elements in the country which still believed that the policy of Greece must be governed by the solid necessities of the Balkan situation, not by nebulous visions of Imperialist expansion.

[1] *White Book*, No. 37.

[2] "Conversation with M. Demidoff," Politis, Athens, 25 Feb./10 March, 1915.

[3] *Orations*, pp. 108, 113–14.

CHAPTER IV

IMMEDIATELY after the resignation of M. Venizelos it was decided to dissolve the Chamber and to have General Elections, in which for the first time the territories conquered in 1912-13 would participate. Meanwhile, the King called upon M. Gounaris, a statesman of considerable ability, though with none of the versatility of mind and audacity of character which distinguished his predecessor, to carry on the Government and to preside over the elections. Under ordinary circumstances these would have taken place at once. But owing to the need of preparing electoral lists for the new provinces, they were delayed till 13 June, and owing to a serious illness of King Constantine which supervened—causing intense anxiety throughout the nation and bringing political life to a standstill—two more months passed before the new Parliament met. The interval proved fruitful in developments of far-reaching importance.

On its accession to power, the new Government issued a *communiqué*, announcing that it would pursue the policy adopted at the beginning of the War: a policy of neutrality qualified by a recognition of the obligations imposed by the Servian Alliance, and a determination to serve the interests of Greece without endangering her territorial integrity.[1] And as the Entente representatives at Athens expressed a certain disappointment at not finding in the *communiqué* any allusion to the Entente Powers,[2] M. Zographos, Minister for Foreign Affairs, in order to remove all uneasiness on that score, instructed the Greek representatives in London, Paris, and Petrograd to assure the respective Governments categorically that the new Ministry did not intend to depart in any way from the pro-Entente attitude dictated by hereditary sentiments and interests alike. The only

[1] *White Book*, No. 34.

[2] "Conversation with M. Demidoff," Politis, 25 Feb./10 March, 1915.

difference between the Venizelos and the Gounaris Cabinets —the difference which brought about the recent crisis and the change of Government—was one regarding the danger of immediate action, but did not affect the basis of Greek policy.[1]

That, by all the evidence available, was the truth. M. Gounaris thought as M. Venizelos thought, as King Constantine thought, as, indeed, every Greek capable of forming an opinion on international affairs thought—namely that, if Greece were to fight at all, interest and sentiment alike impelled her to fight on the side of the Entente.[2] The only question was whether she should enter the field then, and if so, on what conditions.

M. Venizelos persisted in declaring that the Dardanelles expedition presented "a great, a unique opportunity," which he prayed, "God grant that Greece may not miss."[3] His successors had no wish to miss the opportunity—if such it was. But neither had they any wish to leap in the dark. M. Gounaris and his colleagues lacked the Cretan's infinite capacity for taking chances. Even in war, where chance plays so great a part, little is gained except by calculation: the enterprise which is not carefully meditated upon in all its details is rarely crowned with success.

And so when, on 12 April, the representatives of the Entente signified to M. Gounaris their readiness to give Greece, in return for her co-operation against Turkey, the "territorial acquisitions in the vilayet of Aidin," suggested

[1] *White Book*, No. 35.

[2] The best proof is to be found in the Venizelist *White Book*, No. 36,—an exhaustive memorandum by M. Streit on the probabilities of the War, dated 13/26 March, 1915. It is both striking and illuminating that, while in dealing with the attitude of Bulgaria, the author considers three alternatives: (1) Bulgaria in alliance with the Entente. (2) Bulgaria as neutral. (3) Bulgaria as an enemy of the Entente. In dealing with the attitude of Greece he does not for a single moment contemplate more than two alternatives: (1) Greece as an ally of the Entente. (2) Greece as neutral. Further, in the course of the argument which follows, M. Streit discusses a possible understanding between Greece on the one part and Rumania and Bulgaria on the other, with the object either of a common neutrality or, failing that, of a simultaneous entry into war in favour of the Entente, "on whose side alone we can range ourselves."

[3] See the *Nea Hellas*, 22 March (O.S.), 1915.

to his predecessor, M. Gounaris tried to ascertain exactly the form of the co-operation demanded and the extent of the "territorial acquisitions in the vilayet of Aidin" offered. The British Minister replied as to the first point that, having no instructions, he was unable to give any details; and as for the second, that it referred to the "very important concessions on the Asia Minor coast" mentioned in Sir Edward Grey's communication of January. On being further pressed, he said it meant "Smyrna and a substantial portion of the hinterland"—a definition with which his Russian and French colleagues were inclined to concur, though both said that they had no instructions on the subject. Then M. Gounaris asked whether their Excellencies had transmitted to their respective Governments M. Venizelos's interpretation of Sir Edward Grey's offer regarding its geographical limits. The British Minister replied that he had no official knowledge of that interpretation; he had only heard of it semi-officially and had transmitted it to his Government, but had received no answer. The Russian Minister replied that he had transmitted nothing on the subject to his Government, as he had been informed of it in but a vague way by the late Cabinet. The French Minister stated that the subject had never been mentioned to him, and consequently he had not been in a position to make any communication to his Government.[1] Thus the grandiose Asiatic dominion of which M. Venizelos spoke so eloquently dwindled to "Smyrna and a substantial portion of the hinterland."

However, the King, the General Staff, and the Cabinet went on with their work, and were joined by Prince George, King Constantine's brother, who had come from Paris to Athens for the express purpose of discussing with the Government the question of entering the war against Turkey on the basis of guarantees to be determined by negotiations of which Paris might be the centre. In that order of ideas, they had already indicated as the best guarantee the simultaneous entry of Bulgaria, who, according to news from the Entente capitals, was on the point of joining. But this condition having proved

[1] *Conversation entre le Président du Conseil et les Ministres des Puissances de la Triple Entente*, 30 *mars*/12 *avril*, 1915.

unrealisable—Bulgaria refusing to be bought except, if at all, at a price of Greek territory which Greece would on no account pay—they dropped it and set about considering by what other combinations they could come in without compromising their country's vital interests. The upshot of their deliberations was a proposal, dated 14 April, to the following effect:

If the Allies would give a formal undertaking to guarantee during the War, and for a certain period after its termination, the integrity of her territories, Greece would join them with all her military and naval forces in a war against Turkey, the definite objective of which would be the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire; for, unless the Ottoman Empire disappeared, the Greek hold on Smyrna would not be very firm. It was further stipulated that the Allies should define the territorial compensations as well as the facilities regarding money and war material which they would accord Greece in order to enable her to do her part of belligerent efficiently. On these conditions Greece would assume the obligation to enter the field as soon as the Allies were ready to combine their forces with hers. All military details were to be settled between the respective Staffs and embodied in a joint Military Convention, with this sole reservation that, if Bulgaria continued to stand out, the Greek Army's sphere of action could not be placed outside European Turkey. In an explanatory Note added a few days later, at the instance of the General Staff, stress was laid upon the ambiguous attitude of Bulgaria, on account of which the opinion was expressed that the Allies should be prepared to contribute forces which, combined with the Greek, would equal the united Turkish and Bulgarian forces, and that the sphere of Greek action should be limited to the west of the Gallipoli Peninsula; but it was agreed that, if the Allies wished it, they should have the military assistance of Greece on the Gallipoli Peninsula too, provided that they landed their own troops first.[1]

Of these proposals, which were not put forward as final, but rather as a basis of discussion, the Entente Powers did not condescend to take any notice. Only unofficially

[1] Zographos to Greek Minister, Paris, 1/14 April, with the Proposal of same date; *Orations*, pp. 67–9.

the Greek Minister in Paris, on approaching M. Delcassé, was told that, since the Hellenic Government viewed the Dardanelles enterprise in a different light from them, an understanding seemed impossible and discussion useless; for the rest, that enterprise, for which England had desired the co-operation of the Greeks, was now carried on without them, and the situation was no longer the same as it was some days before. Alarmed by this snub, and anxious to dissipate any misunderstandings and doubts as to its dispositions towards the Entente, the Hellenic Government assured M. Delcassé that it continued always animated by the same desire to co-operate and would like to make new proposals, but before doing so it wished to know what proposals would be acceptable. M. Delcassé replied that he could not even semi-officially say what proposals would be acceptable.[1] But M. Guillemin, his former collaborator and later French Minister at Athens, then on a flying visit there, advised M. Zographos to abandon all conditions and take pot luck with the Allies.

This notion succeeded to the extent that Greece proposed to offer to enter the war against Turkey with her naval forces only, reserving her army for her own protection against Bulgaria.[2] The Entente Powers intimated through M. Delcassé that they would accept such an offer, provided it was made without any conditions.[3] Before deciding, Greece wanted to be assured that the integrity of her territory during the War and in the treaty of peace would be respected, that all the necessary money and material would be forthcoming, and that the compensations in Asia Minor allotted to her would represent approximately the area indicated by M. Venizelos. If it was found that on these three points the Hellenic Government interpreted the intentions of the Entente Powers correctly, it would immediately submit a Note in which the three points would be mentioned as going of their own accord, so that the official reply of the Entente might cover, not only the offer, but also its interpretation thus formulated.[4] M.

[1] Romanos, Paris, 17/30 April, 1915.
[2] Zographos to Greek Legations, Paris, London, Petrograd, 18 April/1 May, 1915.
[3] Romanos, Paris, 4 May (N.S.), 1915.
[4] Zographos to Greek Legation, Paris, 22 April/5 May, 1915.

Delcassé refused to listen to any points: Greece, he insisted irritably, should enter the alliance without conditions, coupling her offer simply with "hopes to have the benefit of full solidarity with her allies, whence results a guarantee of her territorial integrity," and "entrusting the full protection of her vital interests to the three Entente Powers." The formula was not incompatible with the best construction which one chose to put upon it; and Prince George—who had returned to Paris directly after the first offer and acted as a personal representative of King Constantine, together with the official representative of the Hellenic Government—warmly advocated its adoption, pleading that, if Greece did come in without delay and without conditions, she might safely trust the Allies.[1]

Whether Prince George's plea sprang from blind faith or from far-sighted fear, is a question upon which the sequel may throw some light; for the present enough to state that it produced no effect. In a matter concerning the integrity of national territory acquired so dearly, King Constantine felt that he could not afford to allow any ambiguity or uncertainty: he was willing to waive the other two points, but not that. He therefore begged his brother to see M. Poincaré and solicit in his name the President's help to secure that indispensable assurance. "The essential thing," he said, "is that the Entente Powers should give us a solemn promise that they will respect and make others respect, until the re-establishment of peace, our territorial integrity, and that they will not permit any damage to it by the future Peace Treaty. Remark to him that Greece has the right to be astonished that friendly Powers ready to accept her as an ally decline to explain themselves clearly with her."[2] What was in the King's mind may be seen from the President's answer: The Powers did not wish to give a formal pledge in as many words lest the Bulgars should be stirred to

[1] Prince George to Zographos, Paris, 24 April/7 May, 1915.

[2] King Constantine to Prince George, 27 April/10 May, 1915. From this document we also learn that on 7/20 April, M. Poincaré had assured the Prince that such a guarantee would certainly be given to Greece, "*pour la période de la guerre et durant la période des négociations de la paix.*"

hostile action on realizing that Cavalla was lost to them.[1]

Prince George, in reporting M. Poincaré's reply, added that the fear of any damage being inflicted on Greek territorial integrity by the future Peace Treaty was completely devoid of foundation; that, having himself expressed this fear, he had been answered: "How can you imagine that we could dispose of any part whatever of the territory of an allied State without its consent?"[2]

These fair words failed to reassure the Hellenic Government, which, after mature reflection, concluded that the formula suggested by M. Delcassé did not sufficiently safeguard Greece against combinations likely to affect her territorial integrity. Its misgivings, which sprang in the first instance from the refusal of an explicit promise, were strengthened by the reason given by M. Poincaré for that refusal. Consequently, it regretted that the Entente Powers did not see their way to come to an understanding for a collaboration which both sides desired, and repeated the assurance of a most benevolent neutrality towards them.[3]

The Greek position was plain: Greece made proposals which constituted a break with the policy pursued deliberately since the beginning of the War—proposals for an active partnership, and in return put forward conditions which ultimately narrowed down to a mere pledge that she should not, as the end of it all, find herself robbed of Cavalla. There were certain things she could do and, therefore, wished to do. There were certain things she could not do, and must be assured that she would not be made to do them. The Entente Powers, on the other hand, would bind themselves to nothing: which is preferable, they said in effect, the elaborate letter of a bargaining bond, or the spirit of spontaneous co-operation; a legal obligation or the natural union of hearts? What Greece needs, rather than rigid clauses with a seal and a signature, is the steady, unwavering sympathy of her friends. If you come with us in a courageous forward campaign for the

[1] Prince George to King Constantine, 28 April/11 May, 1915.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Zographos to Greek Legations, Paris, London, Petrograd, 30 April/13 May, 1915.

liberation of the world and righteousness, how could we fail to be with you in every single question affecting compensations or the integrity of your territories? That's all very fine, said the Greeks. But——

The mistrust of the Greeks was only too well founded. Although Bulgaria received arms from Austria and allowed the free passage of German munitions which enabled Turkey to carry on the defence of Gallipoli, the Entente Powers, satisfied with her Premier's explanations and professions of sympathy, would not give up the hope of seeing her on their side. Indeed, they were more hopeful than ever; M. Poincaré told Prince George he would not be surprised to see that happen "in two or three days,"[1] and the British Minister at Sofia, being less hopeful and giving proofs of perspicacity, was replaced.

About the same time it came to the knowledge of the Entente Governments that the Greek General Staff had resumed its efforts to induce the Servian military authorities to concert measures for their mutual safety, pointing out that, the moment Bulgarian troops crossed the Servian frontier, it would be too late. Whereupon both Servia and Greece were sternly warned against wounding Bulgarian susceptibilities—and threatened with the displeasure of the Powers, who wanted to maintain between the Balkan States good fellowship—by the unhappy project which was once more to the fore. And ere the end of May both States learnt that their territories were actually on offer to Bulgaria.

They received the intelligence as might have been expected. The Servian Premier, after consulting with the King, the Crown Prince, the Cabinet, and all prominent statesmen, informed the representatives of the Entente that Servia, in spite of her desire to meet the wishes of her friends and allies, could not agree to put herself in their hands: the Constitution forbade the cession of territory without the sanction of the National Assembly. He asked them to understand that this decision was final, and that no future Servian Government could be counted upon to

[1] Prince George to King Constantine, Paris, 28 April/11 May, 1915. M. Delcassé, then and for months afterwards, strove to gain over Bulgaria *coûte que coûte*, deploring the possession of Cavalla by Greece. See Deville, pp. 163, 218.

give a different answer, seeing that the present Government embraced every political party.[1]

Not less uncompromising was the attitude of Greece. When the news reached Athens from Paris, the Hellenic Government could hardly believe it: "It is so contrary to the principles of justice and liberty proclaimed by the Entente Powers—it seems to us absolutely impossible to despoil a neutral State, and one, too, whose friendly neutrality has been so consistently useful to the Allies, in order to buy with its territories the help of a people which has hitherto done all it could to help the enemies of the Entente. By what right, and on what ground could they mutilate our country? The opinions once expressed by M. Venizelos, and since abandoned even by their author, do not constitute a sufficient ground for spoliation. The whole thing is an unthinkable outrage: it shows that our fears were justified and our demand for a guarantee was absolutely indispensable."[2]

France, through M. Delcassé, and England, through Lord Crewe, sought to dispel these fears by formally disclaiming any intention to press upon Greece a mutilation to which she objected, and explaining that the eventual cession of Cavalla was only envisaged on condition that she should consent of her own accord. M. Zographos, however, who had done his best to bring Greece in on reasonable terms, convinced of his failure, resigned; and after his departure the Gounaris Government would permit itself no further discussion upon the subject of intervention.

During the lull that ensued, the Greek General Staff once more, in June, approached the Servian Government with detailed suggestions for a common plan against Bulgaria, dwelling on the necessity of a preliminary concentration of sufficient Servian troops along the Græco-Serbo-Bulgarian frontier to counterbalance the Bulgarian advantage in rapidity of mobilization. These steps proved as barren as all the preceding: while Servia would not try to conjure the Bulgarian peril by the sacrifices which the Entente recommended, she could not provide against it by entering into arrangements with Greece which the Entente disapproved.

[1] Alexandropoulos, Nish, 15/28 May, 1915.
[2] Zographos to Greek Legation, Paris, 15/28 May, 1915.

Matters came to a head on 3 August, when the British Minister at Sofia made to the Bulgarian Government a formal offer of Cavalla and an undefined portion of its hinterland, as well as of Servian territory in Macedonia, stating that Great Britain would bring pressure to bear on those countries, and make the cession to them of any compensations elsewhere conditional on their consent to this transaction.

The shock lost nothing of its intensity by being long anticipated. M. Passitch, the Servian Premier, in an interview with the Greek Minister at Nish, expressed his profound dismay at the corner into which Servia was driven; much as she resented this proposal, the fact that she was entirely dependent on the Entente—whose high-handed methods he did not fail to criticize—forced her to give it consideration.

If Servia had been dismayed, Greece was enraged. M. Gounaris addressed a strongly-worded remonstrance to the British Minister at Athens, reminding him that in May his Government had protested against the offer of Greek territory to Bulgaria, and that both Lord Crewe and M. Delcassé had disavowed any intention to bring the least pressure to bear upon Greece, who had thus the right to count on her independence being respected. The Entente Powers, he went on, thought they could promise Bulgaria an agreement in which their own will took the place of Greece's consent, with the idea of exacting her acceptance afterwards. But they were greatly mistaken. The Hellenic Government, voicing the unanimous sentiments of the people as well as its own judgment, repelled with indignation the idea of making the national heritage an object of a bargain; and while thanking the Entente Powers for the courtesy which inspired their notification, it protested in the most energetic and solemn manner against the injury which they proposed to inflict upon the independence and integrity of Greece in defiance of international law.

In reply, the British Government quietly informed the Hellenic Government that the Entente Powers still hoped that Greece would come into line with their policy, and that, as soon as Bulgaria had accepted their offer, they would submit a concrete proposal dealing in detail with

the surrender of Cavalla and defining precisely the Asiatic concessions which Greece would receive in exchange.[1]

This brings the relations of the Entente Powers with M. Gounaris's Government to an end. It is a strange record. We have, to begin with, the curious reception of his first offer—the whole Greek Army, the intervention of which might have turned the Gallipoli tragedy into a victory. Doubtless, there were reasons for declining so considerable a reinforcement. We know that, although Russia had modified her objection to Greek participation, she still regarded the presence of a large Greek force in European Turkey with disfavour; that the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire was not agreeable to France; that the Allies could not at that time afford the military contingents stipulated by the Greek General Staff. There will be no disposition to underrate the complexities of the situation, or want of sympathy for those upon whom fell the task of finding a solution satisfactory to all the Powers concerned. But, though these complexities might be good reasons for not accepting the Gounaris offer, they were hardly reasons for not acknowledging it, even in the interest of ordinary courtesy.

Then came the sterile pourparlers through Paris. Here, again, political difficulties explain without justifying the attitude of the Entente Powers. Their refusal of the guarantee demanded by Greece as an essential condition of her entry into the war was, of course, a natural result of their Bulgarian policy—a policy for which very little could be said. Time perhaps was, at the beginning of the War, when Bulgaria might have been won; for it is not necessary to adopt the Græco-Servian view that she had from the first decided to join the enemies of the Entente and that no amount of reasonable concessions would have satisfied her ambition; the Bulgars are a practical people, and there was at Sofia a pro-Entente party which might have prevailed, if the Entente Powers had, without delay, defined the proposed concessions and proceeded to press Greece and Servia to make them—to expect from either

[1] Communication of Entente Powers to Greek Premier, 21 July/3 Aug.; Greek Premier's reply (No. 8118); Alexandropoulos, Nish, 23 July/5 Aug.; 25 July/7 Aug.; Communication by British Minister at Athens, 23 July/5 Aug., 1915.

State a voluntary self-mutilation was to expect a miracle. By not doing so, by shilly-shallying at Athens, Nish, and Sofia, they only lost the confidence of Greeks and Serbs without gaining the confidence of the Bulgars, who could hardly take seriously proposals so vague in their formulation and so uncertain of their fulfilment. If, on the other hand, the Allies were unable to define the concessions or afraid to shock public opinion by forcing them upon Greece and Servia, then they ought to have dropped their hopeless scheme, without wasting valuable time, and worked on the lines of Græco-Servian co-operation against Bulgaria. Instead, they squashed, as we saw, every attempt which the Greek General Staff made to that end.

But it is not the only aberration with which history will charge our statesmen and diplomats.

Greece was going through an internal crisis; and those who know Greece will know what that means. In private life no people is more temperate, more moderate, than the Greek: a sense of measure always seasons its pleasures, and even the warmest passions of the heart seem to obey the cool reflections of the brain. In public life, by way of compensation, the opposite qualities prevail; and as citizens the Greeks display an astonishing lack of the very virtues which distinguish them as men. The spirit of party burns so hot in them that it needs but a breath to kindle a conflagration. That spirit, whose excesses had, several times in the past, brought the fundamental principles of the Constitution into question, and the country itself to the brink of ruin, was once again at work. Former friends had become deadly enemies: the community was rent with dissensions and poisoned with suspicions. Preposterous falsehoods were freely scattered and readily snatched at on both sides: the side of M. Venizelos and the side of M. Gounaris. Politicians who had been eclipsed by the Cretan's brilliance, came forth now to regain their lustre at his expense. For like all men who have played leading parts on the world's stage, M. Venizelos had gathered about him as much animosity as admiration; and hate is more enterprising than love.

M. Venizelos and his partisans were at least as resourceful as their opponents. The Cretan had never been able to bear contradiction. If his greatness had created him

many enemies, his pettiness had created him more. His tone of prophetic and impeccable omniscience was vexatious at all times, but particularly galling at this agitated period. It was now his constant cry that the situation called for the work of a statesman and not of an international lawyer or strategist. There were times when he declaimed this thesis in so violent a fashion that no self-respecting man could work with him. He had lost all the able collaborators of the great Reconstruction era, and nothing could make him forgive these "apostates." Everybody who could not see eye to eye with him was to M. Venizelos a traitor. It was impossible for M. Venizelos to admit that others besides himself might be actuated by patriotic as well as by personal motives; that he did not possess an exclusive patent of sincerity any more than of vanity. He found it easier to believe that the alpha and the omega of their policy was to undo him. He would undo them—even at the cost of the cause he had at heart: to see Greece openly on the side of the Entente. It is not that he thought less of the cause, but he thought more of himself. His egoism was of that heroic stature which shrinks from nothing. His nature impelled him to this labour; his privileged position as the particular friend of the Entente supplied him with the means.

M. Venizelos had taken a long stride towards that end when he insinuated that King Constantine's disagreement with him was due to German influence. Henceforth this calumny became the cardinal article of his creed, and the "Court Clique" a society for the promotion of the Kaiser's interests abroad and the adoption of the Kaiser's methods of government at home. M. Streit, though no longer a member of the Cabinet, was represented as its mainspring: a secret counsellor who wielded the power, while he avoided the title, of Minister; M. Gounaris, though in name a Prime Minister, was in reality a mere instrument of the sovereign's personal policy—so were the members of the General Staff—so was, in fact, everyone who held opinions at variance with his own: they all were creatures of the Crown who tried to hide their pro-Germanism under the mask of anti-Venizelism. Their objections to his short-sighted and wrong-headed Asiatic aspirations—objections the soundness of which has been amply

demonstrated by experience—were dictated by regard for Germany, the patron of Turkey. Their offers to fight for the dissolution of Germany's protégé were not genuine: the conditions which accompanied them were only designed to make them unacceptable. The Entente should beware of their bad faith and learn that M. Venizelos was the only Greek statesman that could be trusted.[1]

The Powers who had long since adopted M. Venizelos found it convenient to adopt all his theories. M. Delcassé, when called upon to explain why the Greek offer met with such scant ceremony, did so by saying that it came from M. Gounaris, who was the instrument of the personal policy of the sovereign, and who combated among the electors M. Venizelos, the champion of rapprochement with the Entente; that the proposal for the dispatch of large contingents to the East, involving as it did a depletion of the Western Front, was calculated to please the imperial brother-in-law of King Constantine; that the territorial guarantee demanded by Greece would have become known to Bulgaria, thrown her into the arms of Germany, and precipitated her against Servia, whom King Constantine intended to leave to her fate; the trick was too gross to deceive the Allies, and they gave it the reception it deserved. Likewise in squashing the Greek efforts to concert with Servia measures for mutual safety against Bulgaria, while there was yet time, the Allies, said M. Delcassé, acted on the advice of M. Venizelos, who told them that the Græco-Servian Treaty was purely defensive: that it did not provide for action unless Bulgaria attacked; and what a misfortune if Servia, by such measures, should appear to take an initiative which would give Bulgaria an excuse for the aggression she meditated. Therefore, they bade Servia devote her whole attention to the security of her Austrian frontier and not play Bulgaria's game by furnishing her with a pretext for attack.[2]

[1] See the *Nea Hellas*, 20, 21 March (O.S.), 1915; *Orations, passim.*

[2] *Journal Officiel*, p. 76. To appreciate the community of sentiments between M. Venizelos and M. Delcassé fully, one must compare the above statement with that in *Orations*, pp. 68–9. The differences are equally instructive. The Venizelist orator, prudently suppresses from a Greek audience the fact that his Chief frustrated the General Staff's efforts to co-operate with Servia; he boldly surmises, on the other hand, that behind the General Staff's stipula-

On this side of the Channel the inventions of M. Venizelos, it would seem, were accepted as discoveries with equal solemnity. During the Paris pourparlers, according to the French Ambassador in London at all events, England was much annoyed by the Greek Government's hesitations, which she attributed to King Constantine's opposition, and asked herself whether she could either then or in the future treat with a country governed autocratically. She was persuaded that Greece lay under the influence of Germany, and asked herself whether she could in future support a country which let itself be guided by Powers whose interests were absolutely contrary to her own.[1]

The Entente Ministers at Athens, as was natural, had greater opportunities of displaying their solidarity with M. Venizelos. They would perhaps have been better advised had they followed the example of their colleagues at Rome. It can hardly be questioned that the discreet and decorous aloofness of the Entente diplomats from the long-protracted struggle between the Italian advocates of war and neutrality, assisted by Prince von Bülow's indiscreet and indecorous participation in that struggle, facilitated a decision in our favour: nothing does so much to alienate a high-spirited nation as an attempt on the part of outsiders to direct its internal affairs. In Greece the need for discretion was even more imperative. All controversy at such a juncture was injudicious. But if preference had to be shown, it would have been better to have taken the King's side, for all that was valuable to us from the military point of view rallied round him; and, in any case, since the hopes of the Venizelists for oversea expansion depended on the goodwill of the Sea Powers,

tions as to the sphere of Greek military action lurked the *arrière pensée* to confront the Allies with the risk of provoking Bulgaria, whom they still regarded as a potential friend: so the stipulations were, as they were intended to be, unacceptable. Again, while M. Delcassé, addressing a French audience nervous about the Western Front, reckoned that the Entente contingents demanded by the Greek General Staff would amount to at least 600,000 or 800,000 men, M. Politis, less fantastically, estimates them at 450,000 men: this force, which Greece deemed necessary for success, it will be seen, was not far removed from that which France and England eventually wasted in failure.

[1] Prince George to King Constantine, Paris, 28 April/11 May, 1915.

they were tied to us securely enough: so if the land school represented by the General Staff could have been satisfied, the country would have remained united and on our side. Instead of adopting this sane attitude, the local agents of the Entente ostentatiously associated themselves with the Venizelists and boycotted the others, thus gratuitously contributing to a cleavage from which only our enemies could profit.

And that was not all. Having begun by endeavouring to influence the Greeks, they ended by being entirely influenced by them. Forgetting that no correct perception of facts or estimate of motives is possible without a certain mental detachment, they allowed themselves to be swallowed up, as it were, in the atmosphere of suspicion and slander generated by party friction: they ceased to have any eyes, ears, or minds of their own; they saw and heard just what M. Venizelos willed them to see and hear, and thought just as M. Venizelos willed them to think. If the King refused to enter the War, his refusal was inspired by the desire to serve the Kaiser; if he offered to do so, his offers were prompted by the desire to dish M. Venizelos.[1]

Hence, every proposal made to the Entente by M. Venizelos's successors was rejected. Greece was kept out of the Allies' camp, and Servia was sacrificed. For it should be clearly understood that the fate of Servia was decided in the months of June and July, 1915, not only by the development of the Germano-Bulgarian plan, but also by the failure of all co-operative counter-measures on the part of the Serbs, Greeks, and Entente Powers while time was still available. If only there had been anyone of sufficient authority and independence of view to correlate and compose the clashing interests of the moment, a gallant ally might have been saved from destruction. But those best qualified to judge of what was coming, and in a position to frame the corresponding policy, had been driven into reserve by the storm of calumny, whereby their motives were misconstrued, their counsels derided, and their authority undermined; so that in the general uproar their voices were scarcely heard. And there were none—

[1] See M. Poincaré's statement to the *Matin*, reproduced in the *Balkan Review*, Dec., 1920, p. 386; Deville, pp. 161, 168–9.

or very few—to act as intermediaries; for the personnel of the Entente Legations, "wholly believing a lie," had withdrawn in a body from all intercourse with them, had nicknamed them "Boches," and were accustomed to assess as concocted in Berlin every notion that emanated from them. Even the few members of those Legations who had the moral courage to walk the streets without blinkers were subjected to every form of odious insinuation and attack. Venizelos in office, out of office, on matters technical or lay, to him and to him only would anyone listen, and as he knew rather less about the rudiments of the military art than most people, and refrained from consulting those that did, the results were not difficult to predict.

Yet, as late as June, the elements of a good plan were ready to hand in abundance. The General Staff was, as stated, continuing its efforts for co-operation with the Serbs. The King, though too ill to conduct business, would have assented to any military proposal put forward by the General Staff. The people would have followed the King as one man. And the enemy were not ready. All that was necessary was to study with attention and sympathy the advice of the experts: to call the soldiers of the countries concerned to council, and to inaugurate a joint campaign. It was not done—and it is difficult to say now to whom the failure proved most disastrous—to Servia, to Greece, or to the Entente Powers. But for this failure a proportionate share of blame must be laid upon those who, instead of striving to heal divisions in Greece, did everything they could to foment them.

CHAPTER V

ON 23 August, M. Venizelos returned to power as a result of the General Elections held on June 13. The outcome of those elections proved how great his popularity still was. True, in 1910 he had obtained 146 seats out of 182, and now only 185 out of 314. But the majority, though diminished, remained substantial enough to show that he still was, for most people, the man who had cleansed Greece. Nor did M. Venizelos imperil his popularity by revealing his differences with the King. On the contrary, in his own country, his attacks were carefully confined to the statesmen and soldiers opposed to him: the King, M. Venizelos proclaimed, far from sharing their narrow, unpatriotic, pro-German views, "did not exclude exit from neutrality under given conditions, but accepted it in principle as imposed for the serving of the national rights."[1] By his organs, too, the King was described as "a worthy successor of the Constantines who created the mighty Byzantine Empire—imbued with a sense of his great national mission—Greek in heart and mind."[2] So anxious, indeed, was M. Venizelos not to lose votes by any display of ill-feeling against the popular sovereign that he even took some pains to have himself photographed calling at the Palace to inquire after the King's health.

As to policy, it is difficult to determine the part which it played in the contest. M. Venizelos refrained from publishing any sort of programme. His opponents asserted that a vote for Venizelos meant a vote for war. But his most prominent supporters declared that such was by no means the case: although, at a certain moment, he was ready to participate in the Gallipoli enterprise, circumstances had changed, and his future course would depend on the situation which he would find on returning to

[1] M. Venizelos in the *Nea Hellas*, 22 March (O.S.), 1915.
[2] *Ibid.*

power. This vagueness, though not very helpful to the voters, doubtless helped the voting; for there was hardly any pro-war feeling among the masses. The noble ideals emblazoned upon the Entente banners produced little impression on their minds. The experience of two thousand years has taught the Greeks that Governments never fight for noble ideals, and, if they relieve a small nation from a foreign yoke, it is, as often as not, in order to impose a new one. To them the War was a struggle for power and plunder between two European groups. It was matter of common knowledge that Constantinople had been allotted to the Russians, and the Greeks were not particularly keen on shedding their blood in order to place a Tsar on the Byzantine throne. Nor did the Smyrna bait attract them greatly, since it involved parting with Cavalla. At the same time, the lurid accounts of German frightfulness disseminated by the Entente propaganda, instead of inflaming, damped still further their enthusiasm.[1] The Venizelist candidates were, therefore, wise in repudiating the allegation that their victory would inevitably mean intervention in the conflict; and, on the whole, the people who voted for the Cretan statesman seem to have paid a tribute to his personality rather than to his policy.

Meanwhile, Servia, under pressure from the Entente, had decided to promise Bulgaria territorial concessions, and the communication of this decision to the Hellenic Government formed the occasion of M. Venizelos's first official act. Greece, he wrote in reply, not wishing to embarrass her friend and ally at a moment when imperative necessity forced the latter to submit to painful sacrifices, abandoned her objections. But she would be lacking in sincerity if she failed to tell Servia straightway that "the *raison d'être* of the Alliance—namely, the territorial equilibrium and the mutual guarantee of their respective possessions—being profoundly affected by the contemplated changes, the reciprocal obligations of the Alliance could not survive except by virtue of a renewal." M. Passitch replied verbally that he thought like M. Venizelos. But, as it happened, the question did not arise; Servia's promise was coupled with so many stipulations and reservations, that, in the opinion of the Entente Powers,

[1] Deville, p. 174.

it amounted almost to a refusal;[1] and the thread of the negotiations was very soon broken by events. Destiny moved too fast for diplomacy.

Hardly had these dispatches been exchanged, when Colonel Vlachopoulos, the emissary of the Greek General Staff to Servia, arrived in Athens, bringing a report of the gravest nature. After twelve months' evasions, the Servian Minister of War had at last mentioned to him the need for an understanding between the two Staffs, and the Servian Director of Military Operations stated that Servia, far from being able to contribute to a common struggle against Bulgaria the 150,000 combatants stipulated by the Græco-Servian Convention, could not at the moment transport to the northern parts of the Bulgarian frontier more than one or two divisions, while as to the southern parts, which most immediately concerned Greece, they would have to be left with the eight regiments of 1915 conscripts—that is, raw recruits. Simultaneously, the fear which the Greek military authorities had expressed to their Servian colleagues in the previous spring—that delay might prove fatal—was being realized: from all sides came intelligence of the concentration of large Austro-German forces towards the Danube.

In the circumstances, after studying Colonel Vlachopoulos's report, the Greek General Staff submitted to the Government (14 September) the opinion that for Greece to embark on a war against Bulgaria, so long as she was not assured of the co-operation of adequate Servian forces, was tantamount to courting annihilation; and of such co-operation there was no prospect: the moment the Serbs found themselves faced by a superior Austro-German army, the Greeks would have to fight the Bulgars as well as, in all probability, the Turks alone.

As if in confirmation of this forecast, a week later (21 September), the Hellenic Government received from Sofia the official announcement of the conclusion of a Turco-Bulgarian agreement and of Bulgarian mobilization; the latter measure being, according to the Bulgarian Premier, purely precautionary: as the Austro-German

[1] Venizelos to Greek Legation, Nish, 18/31 Aug.; Alexandropoulos, Nish, 19 Aug./1 Sept.; 20 Aug./2 Sept.; 22 Aug./4 Sept., 1915.

armies had just begun an attack on Servia, and the theatre of war approached the Bulgarian frontiers, his country was obliged to take up an attitude of armed neutrality.[1]

The news threw M. Venizelos into a fever of excitement. He had, meanwhile, become most solicitous about Græco-Servian co-operation, and had not permitted his mind to be impressed by Colonel Vlachopoulos's report. When Austria and Germany had their hands full elsewhere, Servia's peril had left him cold; it set him on fire now when they were ready to hurl their legions into the Balkan Peninsula—when it was no longer for Greece a question of fighting Bulgaria only, but Bulgaria and Turkey and the Central Empires. M. Venizelos was a statesman of broad ideas, a hater of dry facts, and an impenitent believer in his own star. For the matter of time he cared very little; considerations of odds did not weigh with him unduly; and he cherished a sovereign contempt for the cautious attitude of professional soldiers and other uninspired persons. Never did these qualities appear more vividly than on this 21st of September.

At 5 p.m. M. Venizelos went to Tatoi, the King's country residence, to confer with him, having previously arranged that a mobilization Order should be drawn up and presented to his Majesty for signature at 6.30 p.m., by which time he expected to have finished his conversation. The following is a synopsis of that memorable interview based on a report from M. Venizelos's own lips.[2]

The King readily agreed to mobilize, but firmly resisted the proposal to enter the war, on the ground that the odds were too heavy. M. Venizelos argued that, even if Germany had five million men available on other fronts, she could not bring them to the Balkans, and consequently there was no cause for fear: he spoke learnedly and at enormous length of geographical conditions and means of transport, of victualling, of guns and bayonets, of *morale*—he had allowed himself an hour and a half. How the King must have felt under this harangue, any expert who has had to listen to an amateur laying down the law to him on his own subject may imagine. On finding his military arguments fruitless, M. Venizelos shifted his ground; though, the military habit being too strong, he

[1] *White Book*, No. 41. [2] *Orations*, pp. 131–8.

could not get away from military phraseology: "I was then obliged," he tells us, "to bring forward my heavy artillery."

"Majesty," I said, "I have not succeeded in persuading you. I am very sorry; but it is my duty, as representing at this moment the Sovereignty of the People, to tell you that you have no right to disagree with me this time. The people by the last elections has approved my policy and given me its confidence. It knew that the basis of my policy was not to let Bulgaria, by crushing Servia, become too big and crush us to-morrow. You cannot therefore at this moment depart from this policy—unless you decide to set aside the Constitution; in which case you must say so clearly, abrogating the Constitution by a Decree and assuming the responsibility."

The King replied: "You know I recognize that I am bound to obey the popular verdict when it is a question of the internal affairs of the country; but when it is a question of foreign affairs—the great national questions—my view is that, so long as I consider a thing right or wrong, I must insist that it shall or shall not be done, because I feel responsible before God."

At this utterance, M. Venizelos narrates, "I remember that a feeling of distress came over me, and with clasped hands, I shook my head in a melancholy manner, saying: 'Alas! we are before the theory of kingship by the grace of God: poor Greece!'"[1] After a little, he told the King that, in the actual circumstances, he could not undertake a struggle for the Constitution; he could only tender his resignation.

The King expostulated: "How can you resign in the face of a Bulgarian mobilization? In these circumstances, as you know, we must not delay even twenty-four hours. After all, who assures us that Bulgaria will attack Servia? It is possible that she may maintain an armed neutrality; in which case our disagreement vanishes, and you can stay in power and carry on your policy." Whereupon M. Venizelos withdrew his resignation.

Of course, he was not deluded by the Sofia Government's

[1] This utterance, for the exactness of which we have to rely entirely on M. Venizelos's memory, was the origin of the charge henceforth brought against King Constantine that he claimed to reign by Divine Right.

announcement of "armed neutrality," and he was determined to go for Bulgaria at once. But how? In his own mind, as he had already demonstrated to the King, no doubt existed that, if the Greeks attacked the Bulgars, they had every chance of crushing them and even of taking their capital. But there was that General Staff by whose opinions the King set such store. They objected Servia's inability to contribute, as she was bound by her Military Convention to do, 150,000 combatants. Therefore, in order to meet this objection, he said: "Don't you think we might ask the English and the French whether they could not furnish 150,000 combatants of their own?"

"Certainly," replied the King; "but they must send Metropolitan (European) troops, not Colonials."

By his own account, M. Venizelos did not take this as meaning that the King had agreed, if the English and the French supplied these reinforcements, to depart from neutrality. He left Tatoi with a clear perception of the divergence between their respective points of view: while they both concurred in the need of instant mobilization, one was for a defensive and the other for an offensive policy; but, as soon appeared, not without hopes of converting his sovereign by some means or other.

A busy, ambitious child of fortune never lets the grass grow under his feet:

"I returned to the Ministry at 7 p.m.," goes on the curious record, "and telephoned to the Entente Ministers to come and see me quickly. When they came, I informed them that a mobilization Order was being signed at that very moment and would be published that evening; but for our further course I needed to know if the Powers were disposed to make good the 150,000 combatants whom Servia was obliged by our Treaty to contribute for joint action against Bulgaria. They promised to telegraph, and immediately dispatched an extra urgent telegram, adding that they would let me know the answer. This happened at about 8 p.m., and at 8.15 there arrived M. Mercati (the Marshal of the Court) with a message from the King, asking me not to make this *démarche* to the Entente. I replied that the *démarche* had already been made."[1]

[1] According to another and ampler version of these events, it had been agreed between the King and M. Venizelos that, while

Forty-eight hours later arrived the Entente Powers' answer, that they would send to Salonica the 150,000 men asked for. M. Venizelos, on communicating this answer to the King, was requested by him to tell the Entente Ministers that, so long as Bulgaria did not attack Servia, and consequently the question of Greece going to Servia's assistance did not arise, no troops should be sent, as their landing on Greek soil would constitute a violation of Greek neutrality. M. Venizelos tells us that he communicated the King's wish to the Entente Ministers, who telegraphed it to their Governments.

King Constantine, it would seem, was left under the impression that the affair had ended; and the general belief was that the policy of neutrality still held good; when suddenly the report came that Allied troops were on their way to Salonica and that Greece was expected to assist in their landing.

The news would have astonished the Greeks in any circumstances; but the circumstances in which it reached them were of a nature to heighten astonishment into alarm. Just then (28 September) Sir Edward Grey stated in the House of Commons, amid loud applause, "Not only is there no hostility in this country to Bulgaria, but there is traditionally a warm feeling of sympathy;" and he reiterated the Balkan policy of the Entente—a Balkan

the latter opened conversations with the British and French Ministers about the possibility of sending 150,000 combatants, the former should simultaneously open conversations with the German Emperor relating the steps taken in regard to the Entente, and asking what Germany would give for Greek neutrality. But when M. Venizelos returned to Athens, he sent a letter to the King informing him that he had changed his mind and that, as a responsible Minister, he could not sanction the projected negotiations with Germany. Whereupon the King forwarded by M. Mercati a reply that, in such a case, he retracted the permission to approach the Entente with regard to reinforcements. See the *Balkan Review*, Dec., 1920, pp. 387–8. Yet another version supplies some additional details: M. Venizelos assured M. Mercati that his *démarche* was of a strictly personal character and did not commit the State in the least; next day he repeated this assurance to the King himself and, at the King's instance, promised to cancel the *démarche*; and two days afterwards the French Minister, M. Guillemin, formally declared to the King that M. Venizelos's *démarche* was considered as null and void—*nulle et non avenue*.—See S. Cosmin's *Diplomatie et Presse dans l'Affaire Grecque* (Paris, 1921), pp. 123–4.

agreement on the basis of territorial concessions. The inference which the Greeks drew from this coincidence was that the Entente Powers were sending troops to despoil them on behalf of the Bulgars—that they intended to bid for Bulgaria's friendship at the twelfth hour by forcibly seizing the parts of Macedonia which they had endeavoured in vain to persuade Greece to yield.[1]

M. Venizelos himself carried the report to the King, inveighing, it is said, intemperately against the Allies:

"I will protest with the greatest energy," he cried, trembling with anger. "I will protest against this unqualifiable violation of our soil."

"Certainly," replied the King, "you must protest very energetically."[2]

[1] The Greek Ministers abroad had for some time been informing their Government of a contemplated occupation by Allied troops of the territories which were to be ceded to Bulgaria; and the suspicion that a dispatch of Entente Forces to Salonica might have for its object "really to occupy for Bulgaria, until the conclusion of peace, the territories coveted by her," has been expressed even by a French diplomat.—See Deville, p. 129, n. 1.

[2] I venture to borrow this little scene from S. Cosmin, p. 125. M. Venizelos at this stage of the proceedings is more eloquent than coherent. He tells us (*Orations*, p. 139), that on informing the King that the Allied troops were on their way to Salonica, his Majesty said: "That's all right. Only please let your protest be in any case, emphatic," and that he replied: "Emphatic—yes, but only up to a certain point, considering what lies beneath." Now, as on M. Venizelos's own showing, the King was no party to the Allies' step, it is not very easy to see how he could have spoken to him as if the King had a secret understanding with them. The episode is one on which more light could be shed with advantage. The same may be said of an allegation that King Constantine secretly informed Bulgaria that, even in the event of an attack on Servia, she would meet with no opposition from Greece. This allegation is supported chiefly by a telegraphic dispatch from the Bulgarian Minister at Athens to Sofia (*White Book*, No. 43), which somehow (it is not stated how) fell into the hands of M. Venizelos's friends and was produced by them in the Skouloudis Inquiry. The authenticity of this document was publicly denied by its alleged author, and its portentous length (three large pages of close print), as well as its unusual style render it very suspicious: it begins: "To-day, 9th instant," and it is dated "23"—as if the author did not know that the difference between the Old and New Calendar was 13 days. In face of these difficulties, strong evidence would be required to establish its genuineness: the more because that Inquiry witnessed a number of similar curiosities—among them an alleged dispatch from the Turkish Minister at Athens to the Grand Vizier, regarding

And M. Venizelos hurried off to his office and drew up the following telegram, which, now printed for the first time, reveals many things:

"A grave misunderstanding threatens to develop between Greece and the Entente Powers on the subject of the despatch of international troops through Salonica to Servia. When I suggested the dispatch of 150,000 men destined to complete the Servian contingents in case of a common struggle against Bulgaria, I did not ask this succour for Greece, but for Servia in order to remove the objection raised against our Alliance, said to have become null by Servia's inability to fulfil her engagement. By accepting in principle to proceed to such dispatch the Powers rendered above all a service to Servia and to their own cause in the East. Likewise, I had clearly specified that, so long as Greece was neutral, the landing of international troops at Salonica could not have our official adhesion. Our neutrality imposed upon us to protest for form's sake; after which matters would go on as at Moudros.[1]

the conclusion of a secret Græco-Turkish treaty. When challenged, M. Skouloudis declared that such treaty never was even thought of and denounced the dispatch as "from beginning to end a forgery," whereupon nothing more was said. (See Skouloudis's *Apologia*, pp. 85–8). These matters are of interest as illustrating the atmosphere of mistrust that poisoned Greek politics at this period, and particularly the relations between the King of Greece and her leading politician.

[1] In pursuance of a decision taken by the War Council on 16 Feb., a British force was sent to Lemnos to support the naval attack on the Dardanelles, landing at Moudros on 6 March. Greece told the British Government that she considered the action irreconcilable with her position as a neutral. The British Government justified it by saying that, as Turkey had not accepted the verdict of the Powers whereby Lemnos and the other islands conquered in 1912 were assigned to Greece, England had the right to treat them as Turkish territory: at the same time declaring that this did not entail any diminution of Greek sovereignty. Thus, whilst Turkey was a friend, the British Government had decided that these islands did not belong to her; it recognized her claim to them when she became an enemy; but not altogether—only for the duration of the War: it was merely a temporary expedient to meet a temporary exigency. By the same line of reasoning, England in the following July justified the occupation of Mytilene. The Greek answer was that "without consenting to the occupation of part of her territory or admitting the arguments put forward by the British Government to justify its action from the standpoint

" It remained for us to take all the necessary measures for facilitating the landing and the direct passage to Servia of the international troops, combining these operations with the needs of our own mobilization. The Minister of Communications was to go at once to Salonica with a number of engineers to arrange on the spot these technical matters, very complicated from the paucity of means of transport in Macedonia. It was understood that, before any dispatch of troops to Salonica, we should have twenty-four hours' notice.

" Things were at this point, when the Military Governor of Salonica—on Wednesday—received a visit from the French Consul, the Commander of a French man-of-war, and two French officers from the Dardanelles, who told him that, in pursuance of a pretended understanding between the Premier and the French Minister, they were going to start reconnaissance work for the landing of French troops and the defence of Salonica against enemy submarines. Furthermore, on Thursday there arrived at Salonica General Hamilton with his Staff and notified the Governor that the Allies were going to occupy part of the town and port, and put them in a state of defence with a view to a landing of troops. General Moschopoulos, very firmly though very politely, declared to them that, without orders from his Government, it would be his painful duty to oppose any seizure of national territory.

" Such a misunderstanding inspires us with the liveliest alarm, for the contemplated landing has not yet been definitely accepted, and after being accepted it cannot be carried out, (1) without a preliminary protest for form's sake, which the British Government has informed us it does not want ;[1] (2) without the absolute maintenance of the powers of our authorities, who alone would decide the measures for the use of the port and railways in such a manner as not to compromise the transport and concentration of our own armies.

of International Law, Greece had to bow before an accomplished fact."—Elliot to Greek Premier, Athens, 9 March, 25 July ; Minister for Foreign Affairs to Greek Legations, London and Paris, 16/29 July, 1915.

[1] Sir Edward Grey objected to a protest because it would enable Germany to say that we had violated Greek neutrality.—Gennadius, London, 29 Sept., 1915.

"Moreover, the great emotion caused in the public by the recent speech of Sir Edward Grey compels the Royal Government to demand from the Entente Powers certain preliminary assurances. While people here expected to see the Powers, after the Bulgarian mobilization, proceed to decisive acts, and at the very least to a declaration that the territorial promises made to Bulgaria in August would be cancelled if within a very short time she did not agree to co-operate with the Entente, they were stupefied to see that to the most evident proof of Bulgarian duplicity and disloyalty they replied by redoubling their solicitude and goodwill. Sir Edward Grey's speech, followed closely by the visits made without notice at Salonica by the representatives of the French and British Staffs, gives birth to the fear that certain Entente Powers may harbour the design of using the troops which would be sent to Servia as the fittest instrument for giving practical effect to the territorial ambitions of the Bulgars in Macedonia. Well or ill founded, this fear exercises over people in Greece, and we have reason to believe in Servia also, a demoralizing effect and threatens to compromise the success of our mobilization.

"The Royal Government finds itself confronted with a situation created much against its will, which imposes upon it the duty, in order to calm as soon as possible the alarms of the people now in arms, of asking the Powers to dispel the fears inspired by their attitude towards Bulgaria by declaring, if possible, that the offers made to her are henceforth null, and that the eventual dispatch of international troops to Servia would in no case be turned to the detriment of the territorial integrity of Greece and Servia. Only formal assurances in this sense could justify in the eyes of Greek public opinion the Government which, while protesting for form's sake, would agree to facilitate the landing at Salonica and the passage across its territory of international troops destined for Servia.

"Please speak to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the sense of this telegram."[1]

From the tenor of this interesting document we gather that, while fully aware of the King's attitude, M. Venizelos

[1] Venizelos to Greek Legations, London, Paris, Petrograd, Rome, 18 Sept./1 Oct., 1915. (Confidential.)

went on negotiating with the Allies for immediate action; and that the Allies proceeded to act before any agreement had been reached. To judge by its tone, M. Venizelos seems to have been annoyed at the Allies' haste as at an unwarrantable attempt to commit him irretrievably without heeding his conditions or waiting for his definite consent: so grave a breach of propriety could not but pain him. But, however annoyed he might be on the surface, at bottom he was doubtless pleased: the move supplied the best means for the conversion of his Sovereign —no argument is so persuasive as an accomplished fact. That was what really mattered—the manner was a detail; and it is impossible to suppose that he meant to let his annoyance stand in the way of his high purpose.[1] Themistocles, to whom the Cretan statesman bears some affinity, it will be remembered, forced the Greeks to fight at Salamis by a similar stratagem.

This, of course, does not exculpate the Allies. Their conduct merits at least the appellation of irregular. But when foreign diplomats and native politicians become fused into a happy family, it would be strange, indeed, if irregularities did not occur. The whole of the Greek story is so thoroughly permeated with the spirit of old-fashioned melodrama that no incident, however startling, seems out of place.

What follows is something of an anticlimax. Next day, the French Minister—from this point onwards France takes the lead and England recedes into the second place—had the honour to announce to his Excellency the Greek Premier the arrival at Salonica of a first detachment of troops, declaring at the same time that the Entente Powers sent it to assist their ally Servia, and that they counted on Greece, who had already given them so many proofs of friendship, not to oppose measures taken in the interest of a country to which she also was allied.[2]

[1] "For my policy the arrival of the Anglo-French was a most material asset. I went for war against Bulgaria and had made up my mind, if Bulgaria attacked Servia, to fight. It was in my interest, besides the 150,000 Greek and the 200,000 Servian bayonets, to have 150,000 Anglo-French, consequently it was a political move absolutely necessary for the prosecution of my own policy." —*Orations*, p. 140.

[2] Guillemin to Venizelos, Athens, 19 Sept./2 Oct., 1915.

In reply, the Greek Premier had the honour to declare to his Excellency the French Minister that, being neutral, Greece could not authorize measures which violated her neutrality. The Hellenic Government was therefore obliged to protest against the passage of foreign troops through Greek territory. The circumstance that those troops were destined solely to the assistance of Servia, who was Greece's ally, nowise altered the case; for, before the *casus fœderis* was realized, the neutrality of Greece could not be affected by the danger which menaced Servia.[1]

To return from formalities to realities. On the same day (2 Oct.), the Bulgarian forces began to mass on the Servian frontier, while the Austro-German battalions were fighting their way across the Danube; and on the 4th Russia launched her ultimatum on Bulgaria. This rapid fulfilment of their own prognostications roused the Greeks to the highest pitch of excitement. But all faith in the Entente had not yet been extinguished. On the very day on which the Petrograd Government delivered its tardy and ineffectual ultimatum at Sofia, at Athens the Chamber held a historic debate, in which M. Venizelos for the first time proclaimed that the Græco-Servian Treaty imposed an absolute obligation upon Greece to make war on Bulgaria and Turkey; adding—in answer to a question, what he would do if on going to Servia's assistance he met the German and Austrian armies—that Germany and Austria must be fought as well, if necessary, and backing his thesis with those appeals to honour which, whether pertinent or not, seldom fail to move a popular audience. The debate lasted till four o'clock in the morning and ended with a vote of confidence in M. Venizelos's military policy—a policy which M. Venizelos, a civilian, expounded to an assembly of civilians as a settled plan, without waiting for the consent of the King and in defiance of the technical advice of the General Staff. In fairness to the Chamber, it should be added that the motion was carried on the assumption that the King was in agreement.[2]

[1] Venizelos to Guillemin, Athens, 19 Sept./2 Oct., 1915. This merely formal protest—quite distinct from the confidential dispatch given above—is the only one of which the world has hitherto been allowed to hear.

[2] M. Venizelos had insisted that the reports spread through the Press concerning the divergence of views between him and the

But we know King Constantine's attitude; and if M. Venizelos hoped by these tactics to force his hand, he was speedily undeceived. No sooner was the debate over than the King summoned his Prime Minister and asked him to modify his policy or to resign. Faced by such a dilemma, M. Venizelos did the only thing he could do—he resigned; and his country shrank back on to the solid ground of neutrality.

It was a narrow escape—how narrow became evident a few hours later. The Allies had promised to send 150,000 combatants. Even if this promise had been kept, the Allied force would not have been, in any strategical sense, an adequate substitute for the Servian contingent. For it was not in place for covering purposes or subsequent offensive action; it was not trained to Balkan fighting; it was not equipped for mountain warfare; and, coming to the same ports as the Greeks, it would have delayed the process of concentration. But, be that as it may, the promise was not kept. What is more, it could not possibly have been kept. Politicians casting about for arguments wherewith to back their views may leave their hearers to imagine that Great Powers keep armies ready to be planked down at any point at a moment's notice; but the fact is that an army, even if it can be spared from other tasks, is a cumbrous affair to move about, requiring all sorts of tiresome things—food, arms, ammunition—the provision of which requires, in its turn, complicated processes, before the army is potentially effective for the rôle assigned to it in the creative mind of an excited orator. Something of the sort had, indeed, been intimated to the Hellenic Government by the Entente Powers themselves when they wished both Greeks and Serbs to avert Bulgarian hostility by territorial concessions—namely, that, as after the commitment of troops to Gallipoli, none remained to rescue Servia, there was nothing for it but to conciliate Bulgaria. Of course, it may be asked, such being the facts, what value had the promise of 150,000 men? This

Crown should be contradicted, and, by telling the King that otherwise the mobilization would have no effect on Bulgaria, had obtained the King's permission to publish a *communiqué* in which he stated that "the Crown is in accord with the responsible Government not only as regards mobilization but also as regards future policy." *Orations*, p. 136.

is a question which M. Venizelos would have done well to ponder, as King Constantine and his military advisers pondered it. As it was, when that afternoon the Allied forces turned up at Salonica, the Greek people had the mortification to find that they amounted to 20,000. Nor did they approach the stipulated figure for months after.

The arguments which had prevailed with many some hours before were suddenly exploded, and to the feeling of confidence which had prompted the Chamber's vote immediately succeeded a feeling of panic. What! cried everybody at Athens, are we to stake our liberty—our national existence—on such a chance: 150,000 Greeks, *plus* 200,000 half-exhausted Serbs, *plus* 20,000 Allies, against 200,000 Austro-Germans, *plus* 300,000 Bulgars, *plus* 100,000 Turks? Nay, if the French and the English love gambling, we don't: we cannot afford the luxury. Venizelos has allowed himself to be duped, said some; others, Venizelos has tried to dupe us.

Such were the circumstances under which the Allies landed at Salonica. Their action has been pronounced immoral and perfidious by some English and even by some French critics; and as it was attended with ill success, it brought double shame upon the contrivers.[1] Certainly, it will not bear investigation from the standpoint of political tact: it was the first of the many performances which little by little alienated a friendly nation from them and discredited M. Venizelos with his countrymen.

[1] See House of Commons Debate, in *The Times*, 19 April, 1916; Chambre des Deputés, secret debate of 20 June, 1916, in the *Journal Officiel*, p. 77.

CHAPTER VI

M. ZAIMIS formed a Government pledged to the policy which Greece had pursued since the beginning of the European War: her future course would be guided by the course of events: meanwhile, she would seek to safeguard her vital interests by remaining armed.[1]

As regards Servia, the new Premier had an opportunity of expressing his views at length soon after his accession to office. The Servian Government, judging that the imminent attack from Bulgaria realized the *casus fœderis*, asked him if, in conformity with her alliance, Greece would be ready to take the field. M. Zaimis answered that the Hellenic Government was very sorry not to be able to comply with the Servian demand so formulated. It did not judge that in the present conjuncture the *casus fœderis* came into play. The Alliance, concluded in 1913, for the purpose of establishing an equilibrium of forces between the Balkan States, had a purely Balkan character and nowise applied to a general conflagration. Both the Treaty and the Military Convention accompanying it showed that the contracting parties had in view only the case of an isolated attack by Bulgaria against one of them. Nowhere was there any allusion to a concerted attack by two or more Powers. Nor could it be otherwise: it would have been an act of mad presumption for either of the contracting parties to offer the other the manifestly powerless and ridiculous assistance of its armed forces in the case of a war with several States at once. And such was the present case. If the Bulgarian attack apprehended by the Servian Government took place, it would be in concert with Germany, Austria, and Turkey: it would be combined with the attack already carried on by the two Central Empires: it would be an episode of the European War.

[1] *White Book*, No. 45.

The Servian Government itself had recognized this in advance by breaking off diplomatic relations with Bulgaria in imitation of the Entente Powers, her European Allies, without a previous understanding with Greece, her Balkan ally. In these circumstances, the Hellenic Government was convinced that no obligation weighed upon it.

Further, Greece was persuaded that her armed assistance freely offered at such a moment would ill serve the common interest of the two countries. Greece had remained neutral in the European War, judging that the best service she could render Servia was to hold in check Bulgaria by keeping her forces intact and her communications open. The common interest demanded that the Greek forces should continue in reserve for better use later on: that Greece should remain neutral and armed, watching the course of events carefully with the resolution to guard in the best possible way, not only her own vital interests, but also those which she had in common with Servia.

The Hellenic Government, while deeply and sincerely regretting that it was materially impossible for it to do at present more for Servia, wished to assure her that, faithful to their friendship, it would continue to accord her every assistance and facility consistent with its international position.[1]

The Entente Powers took no exception to this attitude; which is not to be wondered at, seeing that they had hitherto uniformly ignored the Græco-Servian Treaty, and, by their project of territorial concessions to Bulgaria, had laboured, as much as in them lay, to annul a pact made for the defence of the territorial *status quo* against Bulgaria: not until Bulgaria had been at open war with Servia for some days (14 Oct.), could they bring themselves to declare that the promises of Servian and Greek territory which they had made to her no longer held. Unable, therefore, to tell Greece that she was under any obligation to enter the War on Servia's behalf, Sir Edward Grey attempted to induce her to do so for her own benefit by offering her the island of Cyprus. This offer, made on 17 October, Greece felt compelled to decline: what would it have profited her to gain Cyprus and lose Athens? And what could an acceptance have profited Servia either? As M.

[1] *White Book*, No. 46.

Zaimis said, by intervening at that moment Greece would perish without saving Servia.

Servia could have been saved had an Anglo-French expedition on an adequate scale taken place at any of the times which the Greek General Staff proposed for Græco-Servian co-operation—indeed, at any time except only the particular time chosen by the Entente. When their troops arrived at Salonica, the Servian army—what had been left of it after fourteen months' fighting and typhus —was already falling back before the Austro-Germans, who swarmed across the Drina, the Save, and the Danube, occupied Belgrade and pushed south (6–10 Oct.), while the Bulgars pressed towards Nish (11–12 Oct.). On the day on which the English offer was made (17 Oct.), the Austro-Germans were fifteen miles south of Belgrade, and by the 2nd of November there was no longer any Servia to save, the Bulgars having on that day entered Monastir.

The co-operation of Greece might still have been obtained if the Allies could even then have sent to Salonica forces large enough to assure her that the struggle would be waged on more equal terms.[1] There had always been an influential group among the principal military leaders at Athens who held that it was to the vital interest of their country that Bulgaria should be attacked, and who, to secure the help of the Entente Powers against Bulgarian pretensions in the future, were prepared to run great immediate risks. As it was, the dilatoriness of the Allies imposed upon M. Zaimis a policy of inaction.

This policy, besides being imposed by circumstances, also accorded with the new Premier's character.

M. Zaimis stands out in the political world of Greece as a singular anomaly: a politician who never made speeches and never gave interviews: a silent man in a country where every citizen is a born orator: an unambitious man in a country where ambition is an endemic disease. To find a parallel to his position, one must go back to the days when nations, in need of wise guidance, implored reluctant sages to undertake the task of guiding them. This thankless task M. Zaimis performed several times to everybody's temporary satisfaction. On the present, as on other occasions, he enjoyed the confidence of the Entente Powers,

[1] See *The Times*, 1 Nov., 1915.

as well as the confidence of the King and the people of Greece. Even the journals of M. Venizelos, and the Anglo-French Press which M. Venizelos inspired, paid the customary tribute to M. Zaimis's integrity and sagacity. The homage was due to the fact that M. Zaimis was neither a Venizelist nor an anti-Venizelist, but simply a Zaimist. In domestic affairs he belonged to no party; in foreign affairs to no school: he neither sought nor shunned a change of course.

That explains why he succeeded in ruling Greece for four weeks, and also why he failed to rule her longer.

M. Venizelos had not abandoned his standpoint. Of M. Zaimis's person he spoke with much respect; but of his policy he spoke just as one might have expected M. Venizelos to speak: M. Zaimis had broken the Servian Treaty and would go down to history as a man who had dishonoured the signature of Greece. With regard to the Entente Powers, M. Venizelos thought that M. Zaimis meant honestly—the fact that he was as well known to them as M. Venizelos himself, having served as their High Commissioner in Crete for two years (1906–08), exempted him from the imputation of duplicity—and since the Entente Powers tolerated him, he would do likewise. He only taunted the Zaimis Government in Parliament for not obtaining for its policy a price from those whom that policy unintentionally helped: Greece, to be sure, did not remain neutral to serve Germany's but her own interests, nevertheless, as Germany benefited by that neutrality, she should be asked to give a *quid pro quo*.[1]

It was not the first time that M. Venizelos expressed this idea. At the Crown Council of 3 March he had suggested, if his own policy of intervention was not adopted, to ask from Germany compensations for the continuance of neutrality; and he urged that the King should personally bargain with the Kaiser's Minister. Again on 21 September, when sounding the Entente Powers on the

[1] *Orations*, pp. 143–50. It would hardly be credited, did it not come out of his own mouth, that the compensations and guarantees which M. Venizelos thought, or at least said, that Greece could obtain from Germany in return for her neutrality (a neutrality always benevolent towards Germany's enemies) exceeded those which the Entente had refused to grant Greece for her active alliance!

possibility of sending troops to Salonica, he advised the King simultaneously to sound the German Emperor on the price of neutrality.[1] King Constantine had always shrunk from entering into any understanding whatever with Germany. And, although the advice may have been given in good faith, it is easy to guess the use to which its acceptance might be turned by M. Venizelos, who, even as it was, did not hesitate to whisper of "pledges" given to Germany. So M. Zaimis endured the taunt and avoided the trap.

This state of truce lasted for a month. Then strife broke out afresh. Early in November a member of the Government insulted the Opposition. The Opposition demanded his dismissal. This was refused and matters were pushed to a crisis—whether by the adversaries of M. Venizelos, anxious to get rid of a Chamber with a hostile majority, or by M. Venizelos himself, anxious to get rid of a Cabinet that had succeeded in establishing friendly relations with the Entente, it is impossible to say. Both conjectures found favour at the time, and both seem probable.[2] In any case, M. Venizelos made of that incident an occasion for an attack on the Government's foreign policy, which, ending in an adverse vote, led to the resignation of M. Zaimis and the formation of a new Ministry under M. Skouloudis (7 November).

There ensued a dissolution of the Chamber (11 November) and a fresh appeal to the people; the King, on the advice of M. Skouloudis, inviting M. Venizelos to the polls, as who should say: When you got your majority in June, the nation was with you; many things of the gravest national concern have happened since; let us see if the nation is with you now. M. Venizelos declined the invitation: "The elections," he said, "will be a farce. All my supporters are detained voteless under arms, and the only votes cast will be those of the older and more timid men." How many supporters he had under arms the near future was to show. Meanwhile, he and his partizans reinforced this reason for abstention from the polls with other arguments.

[1] *The Balkan Review*, Dec., 1920, pp. 384, 387; *Orations*, p. 266.
[2] It may not be irrelevant to note that the end of the truce

King Constantine, they alleged, was guilty of unconstitutional behaviour. He had twice disagreed with a Government supported by a majority of the representatives of the people, and twice within a few months had dissolved a Parliament duly chosen by the people. Was such a thing ever heard in a constitutional State? The Constitution had been violated: openly, insolently violated.

In Greece this cry has always been among the Opposition's common stock-in-trade: it is enough for a Minister to misapply fifty drachmas to acquire the title of a violator of the Constitution, and nobody ever is the wiser or the worse for it. M. Venizelos himself had often been accused by his opponents of aiming at the subversion of Parliamentary Government. But in this instance the cry was destined to have, as we shall see, epoch-making results, and for this reason it merits serious examination.

The King's supporters denied that any violation of the Constitution had taken place. The Constitution of Greece, they pointed out, gives the Crown explicitly the right to dismiss Ministers and to dissolve Chambers.[1] M. Venizelos himself had, no longer ago than 5 March, at the second sitting of the Crown Council, declared himself an adversary of the doctrine that the Parliamentary majority is absolute, and recognized the right of the Crown to choose another Government; "On the other hand," he said, "the necessary consequence of the formation of a Cabinet not enjoying a majority in the Chamber is the dissolution of the Chamber."[2] It was in pursuance

coincided with the end of the Allies' uncertainty as to whether they would persist in the Salonica enterprise or give it up.

[1] Art. 31, 37.

[2] Extracts from Minutes in *The Balkan Review*, Dec., 1920, p. 385. Not for the first time had M. Venizelos expounded that thesis. Here is a speech of his on 2/15 May, 1911.

"We are accused of seeking the destruction of Parliamentary Government, because we conceive that one of the foundations of the Government is that those who represent the majority do everything, that it is enough for them that they represent the majority to impose their will. But we, the Liberal Party, entertain an entirely opposite conception both of the State and the Laws and of the powers of majorities, because modern progress has proved that humanity cannot prosper so long as the action of those in authority is not subjected to rules and restrictions preventing every transgression or violation of justice. We shall make the

of this advice that the King, who, as M. Venizelos on that occasion emphatically stated, "has always absolutely respected the Constitution,"[1] dissolved the Chamber.

The only question, therefore, is about the dissolution of the Chamber elected on 13 June, 1915, which gave M. Venizelos a majority of 56. This action, it was alleged, violated the spirit, though not the letter, of Constitutional Law, because the dissolved Chamber represented the will of the people. But, the other side retorted, it was precisely because there was ground for believing that the Parliamentary majority had ceased to represent the will of the people that the King proceeded to a dissolution; and in so doing he had excellent precedent. His father had dissolved several Chambers (specifically in 1902 and 1910) on the same ground, not only without incurring any censure, but earning much applause from the Venizelist Party.[2] In fact, the last of those dissolutions had been carried out by M. Venizelos himself under the following circumstances: The General Elections of August, 1910, had given a majority to the old parties: King George, however, in the belief that public opinion really favoured M. Venizelos, called him to power, though he was only the leader of a Parliamentary minority. M. Venizelos formed a Government, but, as the majority in Parliament obstructed his policy, he persuaded the Sovereign to dissolve it,[3] declaring in the House (11/24 October, 1910): that "it is impossible to limit the prerogative of the Crown to dissolve any Chamber." Obviously, what was

Greeks truly free citizens, enjoying not only the rights which emanate from the Constitutional ordinances, but also those which emanate from all the laws. *We shall defend them against every tyrannical exercise of Government power derived from a majority.*"

This report is taken from a panegyric on the speaker: *Eleutherios Venizelos*, by K. K. Kosmides, D.Ph., Athens, 1915, pp. 56–7. On p. 58 of the same work, occurs another reply by M. Venizelos to a charge of anti-Parliamentarism, dated 14/27 Nov., 1913.

[1] *The Balkan Review, loc. cit.* Cp. *The New Europe*, 29 March, 1917, where M. Venizelos expressly admits that "in February, 1915, the King's action might be regarded as constitutional."

[2] *Orations*, pp. 17–8. Cp. p. 217.

[3] His opponents then acted as he did now: to avoid exposing their weakness, they pronounced the dissolution unconstitutional and boycotted the new elections. For a full account of these events see another panegyric: *E. Venizelos: his life—his work.* By Costa Kairophyla, Athens, 1915, pp. 75–82.

lawful for King George could not be unlawful for King Constantine; and the fact that M. Venizelos's majority of 56 had since the recent elections dwindled to 16, was reason sufficient for the belief that he no longer represented the will of the people, even if it were conceded that the issue of war had been clearly put before the electors who had voted for him in June, and that, at best, a majority of 56 in an assembly of 314 was an adequate expression of the will of the people on so grave an issue. Events had moved so fast in those months and the situation changed so abruptly that King Constantine would have been guilty of a dereliction of duty had he not, by exercising his indisputable prerogative, given the nation an opportunity to reconsider its opinion.

Sophisms suited to the fury of the times apart, the whole case of M. Venizelos against his Sovereign rested, avowedly, on the theory, improvised for the nonce, that the Greek Constitution is a replica of the British—a monarchical democracy in which the monarch is nothing more than a passive instrument in the hands of a Government with a Parliamentary majority.[1] It is not so, and it was never meant to be so. The Greek Constitution does invest the monarch with rights which our Constitution, or rather the manner in which we have for a long time chosen to interpret it, does not. Among these is the right to make, or to refrain from making war. That was why M. Venizelos in March, 1915, could not offer the co-operation of Greece in the Dardanelles enterprise officially without the King's approval, and why the British Government declined to consider his semi-official communication until after the King's decision. Similarly M. Venizelos's proposals for the dispatch of Entente troops to Salonica in September, so far as that transaction was carried on above-board, were made subject to the King's consent. Of course, if the King exercised this right without advice, he would be playing the part of an autocrat; but King Constantine always acted by the advice of the competent authority—namely, the Chief of the General Staff. In truth, if anyone tried to play the part of an autocrat, it was not the King, but M. Venizelos. His argument seemed to be that the King should acquiesce in the view

[1] *Orations*, pp. 12–15.

which a lay Minister took of matters military and in decisions which he arrived at without or in defiance of technical advice.

In this again, M. Venizelos appears to have been inspired by British example. We saw during the War the responsibility for its conduct scattered over twenty-three civil and semi-civil individuals who consulted the naval and military staffs more or less as and when they choose, and the result of it in the Gallipoli tragedy. We saw, too, as a by-product of this system, experts holding back advice of immense importance because they knew it would not be well received. The Reports of the Dardanelles Commission condemned this method. But it is to a precisely similar method that the Greek General Staff objected with such determination. "Venizelos," they said, "does not know anything about war. He approaches the King with proposals containing in them the seeds of national disaster without consulting us, or in defiance of our advice. Greece cannot afford to run the risk of military annihilation; her resources are small, and, once exhausted, cannot be replaced." The King, relying on the right unquestionably given to him under the terms of the Constitution, demanded from his chief military adviser such information as would enable him to judge wisely from the military point of view any proposal involving hostilities made by his Premier. It was this attitude that saved Greece from the Gallipoli grave in March, and it was the same attitude that saved her a second time at the present juncture.

But, in fact, at the present juncture the King acted not so much on his prerogative of deciding about war as on the extreme democratic principle that such decision belongs to the people, and, finding that the Party which pushed the country towards war had only a weak majority, he preferred to place the question before the electorate, to test beyond the possibility of doubt the attitude of public opinion towards this new departure.

From whatever point of view we may examine Constantine's behaviour, we find that nothing could be more unfair than the charge of unconstitutionalism brought against it. M. Venizelos himself a little later, by declaring that he aimed at the "definite elucidation of the obligations and rights of the royal authority," through a "new

Constitution,"[1] unwittingly confessed that the actual Constitution could not bear his interpretation. As things stood, the charge might with a better show of justice be brought against M. Venizelos, who, it was pointed out, had violated the Constitution by inviting foreign troops into Greek territory without the necessary Act of Parliament.[2]

Nor should it be forgotten that King Constantine had suffered grievously both as a Greek and as a general from too punctilious an observance of parliamentary etiquette by his father in 1897. At that date the policy of M. Delyannis was supported by the whole Chamber. It was a policy which the late Lord Salisbury very aptly summed up at the time in the one word, "strait-waistcoat." But, for lack of a man at the top strong enough and courageous enough to take the responsibility of opposing it, it was carried out: Greece rushed headlong into war with a superior power and was smashed. Upon King Constantine, then Crown Prince, had devolved the tragic duty of leading the Greek army to self-destruction, and it was upon his devoted head that afterwards the nation visited the criminal levity of M. Delyannis. Was he to suffer calmly a repetition of the same catastrophe on an infinitely larger scale—to see his country trampled under German and Bulgarian heels—for M. Venizelos's sake?

The practical wisdom and patriotism of the King's conduct cannot be questioned; but we should guard ourselves against exaggerating its moral courage. King Constantine, in turning an inattentive ear to the warlike outpourings of the People's Chosen, knew perfectly well that he ran no risk of wounding the people's conscience—

[1] *Eleutheros Typos*, 23 Oct./5 Nov., 1916; *Orations*, p. 102.

[2] See Art. 99 of the Constitution.

It was in order to defend himself against this grave charge that M. Venizelos denied in the Chamber and out of it, that he had "invited" the Allies to Salonica. Just as it was in order to avoid the charge of violating International Law that Sir Edward Grey in the House of Commons (18 April, 1916) and M. Briand in the Chamber of Deputies (20 June, 1916), affirmed that the Allies had been "invited." From the account of that affair already given, the reader will easily see that, for forensic purposes, both the denial and the affirmation rest on sufficient grounds. The discrepancy might be removed by the substitution of "instigated" for "invited."

just as in offering to lay the question before the tribunal of public opinion he knew that he ran no risk of finding it at variance with his own. He could afford to act as he did, because the country trusted him implicitly. Writing about the middle of November, an English observer described the situation as follows: "The people generally are afraid, waiting and leaving everything to the King. . . . No one now counts in Greece but the King."[1] And the absence of any popular murmur at the rejection of the offer of Cyprus, to anyone who knows how deeply popular feeling is committed to the ultimate union of that Greek island with the mother country, speaks for itself.

This does not mean that M. Venizelos had as yet lost caste altogether. On that fateful 5th of October his reputation as a serious statesman among his countrymen had received a severe blow. The idolatrous admiration with which he had been surrounded until then gave way to disenchantment, disenchantment to bewilderment, and bewilderment to dismay: the national prophet from whom fresh miracles had been expected, was no prophet at all, but a mere mortal—and an uncommonly fallible mortal at that. Nevertheless, while many Greeks found it hard to pardon the Cretan politician for the ruin into which he had so very nearly precipitated them, there were many others who still remained under the spell of his personality. Yet it may well be doubted whether, had a plebiscite been taken at that moment, he would have got anything more than a substantial minority. Fully conscious of the position, M. Venizelos, in spite of advice from his Entente friends to stand his ground, boycotted the polls, and the new Parliament, returned by the elections of 19 December, was a Parliament without an Opposition. M. Skouloudis remained at the helm.

[1] J. M. N. Jefferies, in the *Daily Mail*, 23 Nov., 1915. The testimony is all the more notable because it comes from an avowed partisan of M. Venizelos: "the only man in Greece with a policy."

CHAPTER VII

A MOMENTOUS question—upon the answer to which depended, among other things, the fate of Greece during the War—confronted the Allies as soon as they realized that their Balkan campaign had come to an untimely beginning.

The dispatch of troops to Macedonia originally was based on the agreement that M. Venizelos would get Greece to join. Once M. Venizelos failed to do so, the plan fell to the ground. Again, the object of the expedition was to rescue Servia; and Servia being already conquered, the expedition had no longer any purpose. Such were the views of the British Government, and similar views were held in France by many, including M. Delcassé, who resigned when Bulgaria's "defection" sounded the knell of his Balkan policy. But other French statesmen, with M. Briand at their head, saw in Macedonia a field which promised great glory and gain, if only the noble British nation could be brought to understand that there were interests and sentiments at stake higher than agreements.[1]

The process involved some talking: "I have had my interview with Briand and Gallieni," wrote Lord Kitchener to the Prime Minister. "As regards Salonica it is very difficult to get in a word; they were both full of the necessity of pushing in troops, and would not think of coming out. They simply sweep all military difficulties and dangers aside, and go on political lines—such as saving a remnant of Serbs, bringing Greece in, and inducing Rumania to join."[2]

Other conferences followed, at all of which the French spoke so loudly that the noble British nation could not possibly help hearing—*la noble nation britannique n'est pas restée sourde*. The truth is, France was set on what M.

[1] *Journal Officiel*, pp. 61, 70, 75–8.
[2] Sir George Arthur's *Life of Lord Kitchener*, Vol. III, p. 261.

Delcassé now called the *mirage balkanique*, partly from considerations of a domestic nature, chiefly for reasons connected with the future balance of power in the Near East—and England could not leave her there alone. So the "*nous resterons*" policy prevailed; and the continued presence of Franco-British forces on Greek soil led, as it was bound to do, to abnormal relations with the Greek Government.

The wish of the Allies was to obtain from Greece full licence for the safe accommodation and the operations of their troops; while it was the earnest endeavour of Greece not to let her complaisance towards one group of belligerents compromise her in the eyes of the other. The little kingdom found itself between two clashing forces: the one triumphant on land, the other dominating the sea. But of the two the German peril was the more imminent. The Kaiser's legions were at Monastir—any act that might be construed as a breach of neutrality would bring them in a month to Athens.

M. Skouloudis—a stately octogenarian who, after refusing three times the Premiership, had assumed power in this crisis at the King's insistent desire because, as he said, he considered it his duty so to do—took up the only attitude that could have been expected in the circumstances: the attitude that was dictated by the instinct of self-preservation.

Unlike M. Venizelos, whose mind revolved constantly about war at all hazards: unlike other statesmen who regarded war as an eventuality to be accepted or declined according as conditions might be favourable or unfavourable, M. Skouloudis seemed resolutely to eliminate war from his thoughts.

On taking office he gave the Entente Powers "most categorical assurances of a steady determination to carry on the policy of neutrality in the form of most sincere benevolence towards them. The new Ministry," he added, "adopts M. Zaimis's repeated declarations of Greece's friendly attitude towards the Allied armies at Salonica, and is sufficiently sensible of her true interests and of her debt to them not to deviate for the whole world from this course, and hopes that the friendly sentiments of those Powers towards Greece will never be influenced by false

and malicious rumours deliberately put into circulation with the object of cooling the good relations between them." To Servia also he expressed "in the most categorical terms sentiments of sincere friendship and a steady determination to continue affording her every facility and support consistent with our vital interests."[1]

But at the same time, when told by the Servian Minister that a Servian army might probably, pressed by the enemy, enter Greek territory, he replied that he wished and hoped such a thing would not happen—that Greece might not find herself under the very unpleasant necessity of applying the Hague Rules regarding the disarmament of a belligerent taking refuge in neutral territory. And he repeated this statement to the French Minister, adding, in answer to a question, What would Greece do if the Allied forces retired into Greek territory? that it would be necessary to apply the Hague Rules, but that he hoped very much the contingency would not present itself. On being reminded of the assurances given by his predecessor that no material pressure would ever be exerted on the Allied forces, he replied that the Hellenic Government nowise proposed to go back on those assurances, and hoped that the Powers, taking into consideration the irreproachable attitude of Greece, would be pleased to relieve her of complications and find a solution safeguarding all interests concerned.[2]

The solution he hinted at was that the Allies should re-embark; in which case Greece was prepared to protect the parting guests "even by her own forces, so as to afford them the most absolute security."[3]

But, as nothing was farther from their thoughts, his explanation did not satisfy the Allies. M. Skouloudis was therefore obliged to give their representatives again and again to understand that in no case would the Hellenic Government think of exerting the least pressure, and that, if he had alluded to the Rules regarding neutrality, he had done so because such ought to be the official language of a State which was and wished to remain neutral. But from the very first he had clearly indicated that Greece did not mean to apply those Rules: she would confine

[1] *White Book*, Nos. 47, 48, 49.
[2] Skouloudis's *Apantesis*, pp. 43–5.
[3] *White Book*, No. 52.

herself to a mere reminder of international principles without in any way seeking to enforce respect for them. Greece being and wishing to remain neutral, could not speak officially as if she were not, nor trumpet abroad the assurances which she had not ceased giving the Entente Powers. Surely they must perceive the most delicate position in which Greece stood between the two belligerent groups, and, given that they did not dispute, nor could dispute, her right to remain neutral, it was reasonable and just that they should accept the natural consequences and not demand from her impossibilities.[1]

The Entente Powers could not, of course, deny the reasonableness of this plea; but neither could they ignore the inconveniences to themselves that would arise from its frank recognition. Between their base at Salonica and the troops which had advanced to Krivolak interposed several Greek army corps; at Salonica also Greek camps lay among the Franco-British camps scattered round the town: these conditions impeded organized operations. General Sarrail, the Commander-in-Chief of the Allies, had nothing but praise for the courtesy of the Greek authorities, both civil and military. Yet not a day passed without incidents. He complained that obstacles were placed in his action through a multitude of secondary details: the Municipality claimed duties; the Railway Service did not assist as liberally as could be wished in the work of getting off the stores which arrived at the port. It was necessary that the Greek troops should be moved out of the Allies' way and leave them in full control: privileges which no State could voluntarily grant and remain neutral; which no army could forgo and work efficiently. So the General, while confessing that "we often place them in a difficult position by demanding permissions which their virtual neutrality cannot allow them to give," impressed on the Entente Governments the need of taking strong measures with the Greeks.[2]

Germany would have proceeded to deeds without wasting words—beyond a casual "Necessity knows no law." But nations fighting for noble ideals could not imitate Germany's cynicism. A case had to be made out to

[1] *White Book*, No. 51.
[2] Sarrail, pp. 311–12; *Life of Kitchener*, Vol. III, p. 198.

justify coercion. It was. Greece did not really wish to remain neutral. Misled by a Germanophile Court, she only waited for a chance of joining the enemy—of stabbing the Allies in the back. When this amazing theory—widely popularized by the French and English Press—was hinted to M. Rallis by "Our Special Correspondent," on 18 November, the Greek Minister could hardly credit his collocutor's sanity: "It is mad!" he cried out. "It is senseless to imagine such a thing—when you could have the guns of your fleet levelled on our cities!" The answer, however—an answer the conclusiveness of which a glance at the map is enough to demonstrate to the dimmest intelligence—fell upon deliberately deaf ears. The very journal which in one page recorded it, in another wrote: "Bulgaria has gone; Greece is trembling in the balance. Only a display of overwhelming force on our part can hold her steady and prevent the accession of another 500,000 men to the enemy's strength."

That the publicists who argued thus and who, to give to their argument greater cogency, generously added to the Greek army some 200,000 men, were persuaded by their own reasoning, it is hard to believe without libelling human sense. Apart from the ocular refutation supplied by the map, what had Greece to gain by siding with the enemies of the Entente? That she would lose all her islands, have her coast towns pulverized and her population starved, was certain. What she could get in return, it needed a very robust imagination to suggest. The only countries at whose cost the Hellenic Kingdom could possibly compensate itself for these inevitable sacrifices were Turkey and Bulgaria; and those countries were Germany's allies. A moment's reflection raises a number of equally unanswerable questions: If the Greeks wanted to join Germany, why did they not do so when the Kaiser invited them at the very beginning of the War? Why did they not resist the landing of the Allies? Why did they not attack them when they had them at their mercy: 60,000 French and British, with the Germans and the Bulgars in front of them, and 150,000 Greeks between them and Salonica? [1]

[1] Those were the figures on 17 Nov.—*Life of Kitchener*, Vol. III, p. 199. I have only seen an answer to the second of the above

In this connexion the evidence of an eminent English soldier and an eminent French statesman who visited Athens at that time to study the situation on the spot may be cited. To each King Constantine and M. Skouloudis, in the course of lengthy interviews, declared that the Allied forces had nothing to fear in Greece. Each was convinced of their sincerity, and of the true motives of their attitude: "They both," reported Lord Kitchener, "seem very determined to stick to their neutrality." Likewise General Dousmanis, Chief of the General Staff, and Colonel Metaxas, who were represented to the Entente publics as Germanophile pedants, satisfied Lord Kitchener of their genuine concern about the British sphere in the East, and startled him by pressing upon him a plan of action "almost exactly the same as detailed in my telegrams, and based their conclusions on the same argument almost word for word. They emphatically stated that there was no other way of preventing the accomplishment of the German project."[1] M. Denys Cochin even went so far as to publish to the whole world that the suspicions entertained against King Constantine had no other source than party rancour.[2]

For the rest, a striking proof that the Entente Powers themselves did not believe the story of the Greek Government's hostile intentions is afforded by the fact that, instead of demanding, they deprecated the disbandment of the Greek army. When Lord Kitchener saw M. Skouloudis, the latter said that the Allies' mistrust might well force Greece to consider whether it would not be better for her to demobilize, leaving to them all responsibility for the consequences. Lord Kitchener, in the presence of the British Minister, replied that, "as to some partial demobilization, it was for Greece to decide according to her interests, but he did not think a general demobilization advisable." And again, a little later on, when M.

questions: it is from M. Venizelos, and it is: "absent-mindedness": "Why did not the General Staff do this, since it was to Germany's interest that the Anglo-French should not land? Because, immersed in politics, it no longer took account of military matters!" —*Orations*, p. 140.

[1] *Life of Kitchener*, Vol. III, pp. 202–3.

[2] See interview with M. Denys Cochin at Messina, in the *Daily Mail*, 29 Nov., 1915. Cp. *Le Temps*, 25 Nov.

Skouloudis, irritated by a fresh exhibition of mistrust, told the French Minister that, in face of such a state of things, nothing was left for his unhappy country but to order at once a general demobilization, and let the Entente Powers do what they liked to her, M. Guillemin cried out, "Ah, no. I am decidedly against demobilization." Naturally: "the Greek Army," said Sir Thomas Cuninghame, the British Military Attaché, to General Moschopoulos, Military Governor of Salonica, "saves and secures the flanks and rear of the Allies."[1]

However, the story served the purpose of supplying a pretext for pressure. All ships carrying foodstuffs and other commodities were held up. In addition, Milo—an island not far from Athens—was occupied, and the Allied Fleet was ordered to be ready, in case things should be pushed to extremes, to open war on Greek commerce, to destroy the Greek Fleet, and to bombard Athens, *en respectant les monuments anciens.*[2]

Fortunately, the occasion for extreme measures, by which even the ancient ruins might have suffered, did not arise. General Sarrail, who at first urged that the naval demonstration against Athens should be proceeded with immediately, on second thoughts, prompted by nervousness as to the safety of his troops, deprecated such action. At the same time, M. Skouloudis, alarmed by the blockade—Greece never has more than a very limited food reserve—invited the Allies to state their demands, saying that he would accede to them if it was possible to do so.[3]

Whereupon the Allies, "ever animated by the most benevolent intentions towards Greece, and anxious that the equivocal situation in which events had placed her towards them should come to an end and their relations be re-established on a basis of mutual and lasting confidence," demanded first of all a formal assurance that in no circumstances would the Greek troops attempt to disarm or intern the retiring Allied troops, but that the policy of benevolent neutrality promised would be maintained with all its consequences. They disavowed any wish or intention to compel the Hellenic Government to

[1] Skouloudis, *Apantesis*, pp. 4–5; *Semeioseis*, p. 46.
[2] *Journal Officiel*, pp. 71–2.
[3] *Life of Kitchener*, Vol. III, p. 199–203.

participate in the European War from which it had declared that it meant to hold aloof. But it was a vital necessity for them not to let it in any way hinder the freedom of their movements on land or sea, or compromise the security of their troops throughout the field of their operations. They therefore must be assured that they will obtain, according to the promise already given by M. Zaimis, all the facilities which they might require, notably in the port of Salonica and on the roads and railways. It was understood that the Entente Powers would restore in full at the end of the War all the parts of Greek territory which they might be obliged to occupy during the hostilities, and that they would duly pay indemnities for all damage caused by the occupation.[1]

M. Skouloudis, after thanking the Entente Powers for the benevolent intentions with which they declared themselves to be animated towards Greece, willingly repeated the assurances he had so many times already given, that the Greek troops would in no circumstances seek to disarm or intern the Allied troops, and that the Greek Government in its relations with the Entente Powers would in everything hold fast to its policy of benevolent neutrality. He once more noted the reiterated disavowal by the Allied Governments of any wish or intention to force Greece into the War, and on his part disavowed any wish or intention to hinder in any way the freedom of their movements on land or sea, or to compromise in any way the security of their troops. The Hellenic Government had always kept the promises made by M. Zaimis to the very utmost of its ability, and had no difficulty in renewing the assurance that the Allied Governments would continue to receive all the facilities their troops might require in the port of Salonica, and on the roads and railways.[2]

These prefatory amenities led on 10 December to a detailed Agreement, the Greek Government promising to move its troops out of the way and "not to oppose by force the construction of defensive works or the occupation of fortified points," but reserving to itself the right to protest

[1] Communication by the Entente Ministers, Athens, 10/23 Nov., 1915.

[2] Skouloudis to Entente Ministers, Athens, 11/24 Nov., 1915.

against such operations "energetically and seriously, not as a mere form"—a right which the Allies easily conceded[1]—and emphatically declaring that "should the Allied troops by their movements bring the war into Greek territory, the Greek troops would withdraw so as to leave the field free to the two parties to settle their differences."

The Entente Ministers expressed their satisfaction, and M. Skouloudis expressed the hope that their Governments, convinced at last of the Greek Government's sincerity, would not only drop coercion, but comply with its request for financial and commercial facilities. They promised that all difficulties would disappear as soon as the military authorities on the spot had given effect to the agreement; and the French Minister repeated his Government's declaration that it would be happy to accord Greece all financial and commercial facilities as soon as the situation cleared.[2]

[1] "*Le Gouvernement Grec se réservait de protester; nous nous réservions de ne pas répondre. (Rires).*" M. Briand in the *Journal Officiel*, p. 72.

[2] *White Book*, No. 54.

CHAPTER VIII

THE situation did not clear—how could it? Of all diplomatic fictions that of "benevolence" is perhaps the most incompatible with the grim realities of war.

General Sarrail had from the outset been empowered to take any measures which he might judge necessary at his discretion. But fear of the Greek army for a time compelled him to temper vigour with caution. That fear decreased in proportion as the Allied contingents in Macedonia increased; and hence a series of acts which show how the General used his discretion.

First, he judged it necessary to blow up the bridge of Demir-Hissar. He blew it up—thus completely cutting off the Greek forces in Eastern Macedonia, and, incidentally, letting the enemy know that no offensive across the Struma was contemplated by the Allies. Next, he judged it necessary to seize the Fort of Kara-Burnu which commands the entrance to Salonica Harbour. He seized it—despite a solemn engagement to the contrary.[1] Then he judged it necessary to occupy the town of Florina. He occupied it. An appreciation of the efficacy or expediency of these measures—beyond a passing allusion to the obvious blunder committed by the destruction of the Demir-Hissar bridge—would be out of place here. For our present purpose their interest lies in the light they throw upon the conditions, apart from the purely military difficulties, created by the intrusion of foreign troops on neutral soil.

Afloat the Allies were not less vigorous than ashore. They judged it necessary to occupy Corfu, in order to accommodate the remnants of the Servian army that had escaped across Albania. They occupied Corfu. They judged it necessary to occupy Castellorizo, an islet off the coast of Asia Minor. They occupied Castellorizo. They

[1] See the Agreement of 10 Dec., 1915 (Art. 5), *White Book*, No. 54; Sarrail, pp. 94–6, 322–30.

judged it necessary to occupy Suda Bay in Crete and Argostoli Bay in Cephalonia. They occupied them.

It is worthy of note that the occupation of Castellorizo was prepared by a local revolt stirred up by the French Consular and Naval authorities,[1] and that the occupation of Corfu constituted a flagrant violation of international pacts (Treaties of London, 14 Nov., 1863, and 29 March, 1864) to which the Entente Powers were signatories, and by virtue of which the perpetual neutrality of the island was guaranteed as strictly as that of Belgium—a circumstance that afforded the Central Powers an opportunity to protest against Anglo-French contempt for the sanctity of treaties.[2]

Among other arbitrary proceedings may be mentioned numerous arrests and deportations of enemy subjects and Consuls, and even the execution of some Greek subjects, by the Allied military and naval authorities.[3]

Against each of these encroachments upon its sovereignty the Greek Government protested with ever-deepening bitterness. The Entente Governments accepted its protests and disregarded them: International Law is the will of the stronger. Besides, says M. Briand, "we were there in a country where force is more effective than anywhere else."[4] From this utterance, which was received by the French Chamber with applause, we get a glimpse into the workings of the official Entente mind, and more than a glimpse of the guiding principles of Entente policy in Greece during that period.

The reason for that policy publicly alleged was, as we have seen, the Allies' need to do their own fighting in

[1] Skouloudis to Greek Legation, Paris, 12, 14, 16 Dec. (O.S.); Guillemin to Skouloudis, 16/29 Dec.; Skouloudis to Guillemin, 17/30 Dec., 1915.

[2] Skouloudis to Entente Ministers, Athens, 31 Dec., 1915/13 Jan., 1916; Gryparis, Vienna, 4/17 Jan., 1916.

[3] Among the Greek State Papers there is a voluminous file labelled "Violations of Hellenic Neutrality by the Entente Allies." It contains a mass of complaints by the Central Powers to the Greek Government and by the Greek Government to the Entente Governments. Special attention is drawn to the case of two Greeks put to death by the French military authorities in Macedonia for having been found in possession of German proclamations dropped from aeroplanes: See Skouloudis to French Legation, Athens, 13/26 April, 1916.

[4] *Journal Officiel*, p. 70.

peace and security. Their real aim, M. Skouloudis believed, was to draw Greece gradually into the War. In so believing he interpreted correctly the French Government's views as the French Government itself had expounded them to the British Government: "To bring Greece in."[1] With that as one of its objects the Salonica expedition had been persisted in; and as Greece persisted in standing out, the question resolved itself into one of continuous pressure.

M. Skouloudis was confirmed in his belief by the fact that the Allies would not allow demobilization, and at the same time would not lend Greece the 150 million francs which had been promised: they knew, through the International Financial Commission, that the mobilized army swallowed up every available resource, and they calculated that, when the strain reached the breaking point, Greece would fall at their feet and beg for relief at any price: the Ministry would have either to give way or make place for one which favoured war. The Ministry, determined to do neither, cast about for some means of making ends meet, when Germany came forward with an offer to lend temporarily a portion of the sum promised by France. This offer, though, of course, prompted by the desire to enable Greece to maintain her neutrality, was free from any political conditions, and M. Skouloudis accepted it thankfully. Negotiations began on 20 November, 1915, and by 7 March, 1916, an instalment of 40 million francs was actually paid. For obvious reasons the transaction was carried through without the knowledge of the Allies, from whom the Greek Premier still cherished some faint hopes of receiving the 150 millions.[2]

Whether he had any right to cherish such hopes, after accepting financial assistance from their enemies, is a very nice ethical point; but a nicer point still is, whether the Allies had any right left to question the ethics of others. M. Skouloudis doubtless could plead in self-justification that his remaining armed was admittedly a boon to them, as much as his remaining neutral was a boon to their enemies; and that both sides should therefore help to defray the cost. He was impartial. However, his hopes were dashed to the ground.

[1] *Life of Kitchener*, Vol. III, p. 261.

[2] Skouloudis, *Apantesis*, pp. 3–11; *White Book*, Nos. 75–8 82–3, 88, 91.

On 5 April the French and British Ministers called on the Premier and informed him that the Servian army at Corfu, having sufficiently rested and recovered, the Entente proposed to transport it to Salonica through Greece, and they had no doubt that Greece would readily consent. M. Skouloudis replied that Greece could not possibly consent. The transport of over 100,000 men across the country would mean interruption of railway traffic and suspension of all economic life for at least two months; it would expose the population to the danger of infection by the epidemic diseases from which the Serbs had been suffering; above all, it would be regarded by the Central Powers as a breach of neutrality and might force Greece into the War against her will. M. Skouloudis urged these reasons with all the firmness, and more than all the plainness, that diplomacy allowed, ending up with an emphatic: "No, gentlemen, such a thing we will not permit. I declare this to you officially."

"Our Governments," retorted the French Minister, "have not instructed us to ask for your permission, but to notify to you their decision."

M. Skouloudis was a proud old man, fiercely jealous of his country's independence and inflexible in his defence of it. Of his iron determination he had already given the Allies ample proof. But hitherto he had kept his gathering indignation under control. He could do so no longer: the Frenchman's speech and, more than the speech, the manner in which it had been delivered, were too much for his feelings.

"And I," he repeated, "declare to you that my Government's decision is not to permit this overland passage—further, I declare to you that, in the contrary event, I shall find myself under the necessity of blowing up the railway,"—then, in a crescendo of rage, he went on: "You have left us nothing sound in this country—neither self-respect, nor dignity, nor liberty, nor the right to live as free men. But do not forget that there is a limit to the most benevolent patience and to the most willing compliance, that one last drop makes the cup overflow. . . ."

The British Minister, seeing that the conversation with his colleague grew every moment more tempestuous, interposed by asking if Greece would equally object to a

sea-passage of the Serbs by the Canal of Corinth; and, the Cabinet having been consulted, a favourable answer was given. But meanwhile the demand for an overland passage was pressed by the Servian Minister, and was supported by all the Entente representatives. Again M. Skouloudis gave a categorical refusal, and in a telegraphic circular to the Greek Ministers in London, Rome, and Petrograd—experience had taught him that it was worse than useless to argue with Paris—he reiterated the reasons why Greece could not consent, laying special stress on the now inflamed state of public opinion, and pointing out that the dangers of the sea route were greatly exaggerated since most of the journey would be through close waters. He added that, in view of the absence of any real military necessity for an overland transport, and of the international consequences which compliance involved, the whole civilized world would justify Greece in her refusal and condemn any coercion on the part of the Entente as an outrage. He concluded by requesting the Greek Ministers to place all these reasons before the respective Governments in order that, on realizing the iniquity of the project, they might use all their influence to dissuade the French Government from it. England appreciated the force of M. Skouloudis's arguments and, thanks to her, diplomatic pressure ceased. But there remained another form of pressure, from which France would not desist.

M. Briand angrily declared that, under the circumstances, there could be no talk of a loan. M. Skouloudis pleaded that Greece had not asked the loan as a price for the violation of her neutrality; she had asked it on the supposition that the Entente Powers could not see with indifference her military and economic paralysis.[1]

The plea made no impression; and, rebuffed by Paris, M. Skouloudis's Government once more turned to Berlin. It received another credit of forty million marks; but, notwithstanding this supply, day by day it saw its expenses increasing and its revenues diminishing. Besides the men under arms, there were crowds of destitute refugees from Turkey, Bulgaria and Servia to be provided for, and the native population, owing to the rise in the cost of living

[1] Skouloudis, *Semeioseis*, pp. 33–6; *White Book*, Nos. 57–63.

and to unemployment, also stood in urgent need of relief. At the same time, customs and other receipts became more and more precarious owing to the Allies' constant interference with the freedom of commerce.[1]

Truly, after the Allies' landing on her soil, the neutrality of Greece became something unique in the annals of international jurisprudence: a case defying all known maxims, except Machiavelli's maxim, that, when placed between two warring powers, it is better for a state to join even the losing side than try to remain neutral. By trying to do so, Greece could not avoid, even with the utmost circumspection, exposing herself to insult and injury.

One more corollary of the Salonica Expedition deserves to be noted. Since the beginning of the War, Athens, like other neutral capitals, had become the centre of international intrigue and espionage; each belligerent group establishing, beside their officially accredited diplomatic missions, secret services and propagandas. In aim, both establishments were alike. But their opportunities were not equal. The Germans had to rely for procuring information and influencing public opinion on the usual methods. The French and the British added to those methods others of a more unusual character.

From the riffraff of the Levant they had recruited a large detective force which operated under the sanctuary of their Legations.[2] The primary function of these gentry was to discover attempts at the fuelling and victualling of German submarines; and, stimulated by a permanent offer of a reward of £2,000 from the British Minister, they did their best to discharge this necessary function. Hardly a day passed without their supplying information which, transmitted to the Fleets, led to raids at all points of the Greek coasts and isles. Let one or two examples suffice for many.

[1] Skouloudis, *Apantesis*, pp. 12–14.

[2] Of the 162 individuals who, by the end of 1916, composed the personnel of the Franco-British Secret Police at Athens, only about 60 were natives of Old Greece; the rest came from Crete, Constantinople, Smyrna, etc. An analysis of the official List, signed by the Prefect of the Greek Police, reveals among them: 7 pickpockets, 8 murderers, 9 ex-brigands, 10 smugglers, 11 thieves, 21 gamblers, 20 White Slave traffickers. The balance is made up of men with no visible means of subsistence.

The French Intelligence Service reported that the Achilleion—the Kaiser's summer palace at Corfu—was a thoroughly organized submarine base, with a wharf, stores of petrol, and pipes for carrying it down to the water's edge. On investigation, the wharf turned out to be an ordinary landing stage for the palace, the stores a few tins of petrol for the imperial motor cars, and the pipes water-closet drains.[1]

In consequence of similar "information received from a trustworthy source"—that a Greek steamer had by order of the Greek Government transported to Gerakini and handed over to the Custom House authorities for the use of German submarines a quantity of benzine—a French detachment of marines landed, forced its way into the Custom House, and proceeded to a minute perquisition, even digging up the ground. The result was negative, and the officer commanding the detachment had to apologize to the Chief of the Custom House. Whereupon the Greek Government asked the French Minister for the source of the information, adding that it was time the Allies ceased from putting faith in the words of unscrupulous agents and proceeding to acts both fruitless and insulting.[2]

Were the Allies in the mood to use ordinary intelligence, they would have seen the truth themselves; for not one discovery, after the most rigorous search, was ever made anywhere to confirm the reports of the Secret Services.[3] As it was, the spies were able to justify their existence by continuing to create work for their employers; and the

[1] Du Fournet, pp. 115–17; Skouloudis to Greek Legation, Paris, 19 Feb./4 March, 1916.

[2] Politis to Guillemin, 9/22 Feb., 1916.

[3] Considering the extent of the coast-line of Greece and the poverty of her inhabitants, this would be incredible, were it not attested by the Allies' Naval Commander-in-Chief, whose task it was to verify every report transmitted to him: "*Jamais un seul de ses avis n'a été reconnu exact; la plupart étaient visiblement absurdes.*" "*Malgré les vérifications les plus répétées jamais un seul de ces faits n'a été reconnu exact. Un certain nombre de coquins, incompétents mais malins, vivaient du commerce de ces fausses nouvelles.*"—Du Fournet, pp. 115, 304. Cp. also pp. 85, 270. The French Admiral of Patrols, Faton, and the British Admiral Kerr, are equally emphatic in testifying "that all these stories about supplying the submarines were fabrications."—See Vice-Admiral Mark Kerr, in the *Morning Post*, 13 Dec., 1920.

lengths to which they were prepared to go are well illustrated by a case that formed the subject of some questions in the House of Commons. M. Callimassiotis, a well-known Greek Deputy, was denounced by the French Secret Service as directing an organization for the supply of fuel and information about the movements of Allied shipping to German submarines. A burglarious visit to his house at the Piræus yielded a rich harvest of compromising documents. The British Secret Service joined in following up the clues, and two Mohammedan merchants of Canea were arrested and deported to Malta on unimpeachable evidence of complicity. Closer investigation proved the whole affair from beginning to end a web of forgery and fraud. The hoax ended in the British Minister at Athens apologizing to the Greek Deputy, and in the Mohammedan merchants being brought back home as guests aboard a British destroyer.[1]

Thus a new field was opened up to those who wished to ruin business competitors, to revenge themselves on personal enemies, or, above all, to compromise political opponents. From the words of Admiral Dartige: "The revelations of the Venizelist Press concerning the revictualling of German submarines in Greece are a tissue of absurd legends,"[2] we learn the main source of these myths and also the principal motive. For if M. Venizelos and his party had, by their voluntary abstention, deprived themselves of a voice inside the Chamber, they more than made amends by their agitation out of doors. The coercion of Greece came as grist to their mill. The Liberal newspapers triumphantly pointed to it as concrete proof of the wisdom of their Leader's policy, and held up the names of the men who had thwarted him to obloquy and scorn. M. Skouloudis and his colleagues were abused for drawing down upon the country through their duplicity the wrath of the Powers which could best help or harm it. The "revelations" served a twofold purpose: to foster the belief that they promoted secretly the interests of Germany, and to furnish the Allies with fresh excuses for coercion. And in the Franco-British Intelligence organization the scheming brain of M. Venizelos found a ready-

[1] J. C. Lawson, *Tales of Ægean Intrigue*, pp. 93–142.
[2] Du Fournet, p. 304.

fashioned tool: men willingly shut their eyes to the most evident truths that hinder their designs, and readily accept any myth that furthers them.

Nor did that organization assist M. Venizelos merely by traducing his opponents' characters and wounding their *amour-propre*. In March, 1916, the Chief of the French Secret Service, at a conference of the Allied admirals, proposed that they should lay hands on the internal affairs of Greece: that they should stick at nothing—*qu' on devait tout oser*. The motion was rejected with disgust by the honest sailors. But the mover was in direct communication with political headquarters in Paris; and his plan was only deferred. Meanwhile he and his associates with the rogues in their pay made themselves useful by collaborating in the Venizelist agitation, mixing themselves up in party disturbances, carrying out open perquisitions and clandestine arrests, and preparing the ground for graver troubles in the future.[1]

The representatives of the Entente at Athens pursued these unedifying tactics in the firm conviction that the cause of M. Venizelos was their cause; which was true enough in the sense that on him alone they could count to bring Greece into the War without conditions. As to the Entente publics, M. Venizelos was their man in a less sober sense: he kept repeating to them that his opponents under the guise of neutrality followed a hostile policy, and that his own party's whole activity was directed to preventing the King from ranging himself openly on the side of the Central Powers. The Entente Governments, whatever they may have thought of these tactics and slanders, did not dream of forbidding the one or of contradicting the other, since the former aided their client and the latter created an atmosphere which relieved them from all moral restraints.

They only upbraided M. Venizelos gently for keeping out of Parliament. So M. Venizelos, seeing that he had gained nothing by abstention and forgetting that he had

[1] Du Fournet, pp. 112–16. In this work we find a full picture of the French Secret Service. Unfortunately, or fortunately, no authoritative record has been published of its British counterpart. Mr. Lawson's account deals only with a provincial branch of the establishment.

pronounced the Chamber unconstitutional, obeyed. Early in May, two of his partisans carried two bye-elections in Eastern Macedonia, and the leader himself was returned by the island of Mytilene. Three seats in Parliament could not overturn M. Skouloudis; and it cannot be said that his re-appearance on the scene enhanced the credit of M. Venizelos with the nation. Ever since the landing of the Allies, and largely through their own actions, his prestige in Greece declined progressively. He was reproached more and more bitterly for his "invitation" to them; and these reproaches grew the louder, the closer he drew to the foreigners and the farther he diverged from his own King. In a letter from Athens, dated 24 May, occurs the following passage: "Venizelos becomes every day more and more of a red republican. How that man has duped everybody! We all thought him a genius, and he simply is an ambitious maniac."

Later on M. Venizelos explained why he had not already revolted. A revolution there and then, no doubt, would have saved a lot of trouble; "But before the idea of revolution matures in the mind and soul of a statesman, there is need for some evolution, which cannot be accomplished in a few moments," he said. Since October, this idea had had time to evolve in his mind and soul. But his hate of "tyranny" was not blind. It was peculiarly clear-sighted, and he judged the difficulties with precision: "Such a step would not have been favoured by the Entente Powers, whose support would have been indispensable for its success." Then again: "If before the Bulgarian invasion of Macedonia I had kindled a civil war, public opinion would have held me responsible for the invasion, and that would certainly have arrested my movement."[1]

It so chanced that, scarcely had a fortnight passed since his reappearance in the Chamber, when the Bulgars provided M. Venizelos and at least one of the Entente Powers with this requisite for their evolution.

[1] *The New Europe*, 29 March, 1917; *Orations*, pp. 142–3.

CHAPTER IX

WHEN M. Venizelos taunted M. Skouloudis with forgetting that he had promised the Allies "not only simple neutrality, nor simply benevolent neutrality, but most sincerely benevolent neutrality," the aged Prime Minister, who apparently had a sense of humour, replied: "I do not know how there can be such a thing as benevolent neutrality. A neutrality really benevolent towards one of the belligerents is really malevolent towards the other, consequently it is more or less undisguised partiality. Between benevolence and malevolence there is no room for neutrality." He only knew, he said, one kind of neutrality—the absolute neutrality towards both belligerents.[1] And he lived up to his knowledge so conscientiously that he earned the gratitude of neither, but saw himself the sport of both.

No sooner had the Allies begun to fall back from Krivolak, than the German Military Attaché at Athens presented to King Constantine a telegram from General von Falkenhayn, dated 29 November, 1915, in which the Chief of the German General Staff intimated that, if Greece failed to disarm the retreating Entente forces or to obtain their immediate re-embarkation, the development of hostilities might very probably compel the Germans and the Bulgars to cross her frontiers. After a consultation, the Skouloudis Cabinet replied through the King that Greece did not consent to a violation of her soil; but if the violation bore no hostile character towards herself, she would refrain from opposing it by force of arms on certain guarantees: that the Bulgars should categorically renounce every claim to territories now in Greek possession, that simultaneously with their entry into Macedonia Greece should be allowed to occupy Monastir as a pledge for their exit, that in no circumstance whatever should the King of Bulgaria or his sons enter Salonica,

[1] *Orations*, p. 155; Skouloudis's *Semeioseis*, p. 36.

that all commands should be exclusively in German hands, and so forth—altogether nineteen conditions, the principal object of which was to ward off the danger of a permanent occupation, but the effect of which would have been to hamper military operations most seriously.

The German Government, perturbed by the extent and nature of the guarantees demanded, referred the matter to Falkenhayn, who would only grant three comprehensive assurances: to respect the integrity of Greece, to restore the occupied territories at the end of the campaign, and to pay an indemnity for all damage caused. On those terms, he invited Greece to remove her army from Macedonia so as to avoid the possibility of an accidental collision. The King refused, giving among other reasons that such a concession had been denied to the Entente. Thereupon Falkenhayn asked, as an alternative to a total evacuation, that Greece should pledge herself to resist Entente landings in the Gulfs of Cavalla and Katerini. Again Greece refused, on the ground that this would involve the use of force against the Entente, whereas she was determined not to abandon her neutrality as long as her interests, in her own opinion, did not compel her so to do.[1]

After this answer, given on 27 January, 1916, conversations on the subject ceased for about six weeks.

Thus it appears that during the period when the Allies were, or professed to be, most nervous about the intentions of Greece, it was the fear of Greek hostility, carefully nursed by Greek diplomacy, that checked the Germans and the Bulgars from following up their advantage and sweeping the Franco-British troops into the sea. It was the same attitude of Greece that made the enemy hesitate to break into Macedonia during the following months, and gave the Allies time to fortify themselves.

On 14 March, Falkenhayn returned to the charge, and was once more met with a list of exorbitant conditions. This time the conversations assumed the character of recriminations; the Greek Government complaining of Bulgarian encroachments on the neutral zone fixed along the frontier, Falkenhayn retorting that the provocative movements of the Entente Forces obliged the Central Powers to fortify their positions and threatening a rupture

[1] *White Book*, Nos. 70–4, 79, 81, 84, 86–90.

if the Greek soldiers continued to hinder the Bulgars.[1] Then, after another interval, he announced (7 May) that, owing to an English advance across the Struma, he found it absolutely necessary to secure in self-defence the Rupel Pass—key of the Struma Valley.[2]

M. Skouloudis endeavoured to make the German Government dissuade the General Staff from its project. Falkenhayn, he said, was misinformed as to an English advance —only small mounted patrols had crossed the Struma. He suspected that he was deceived and instigated by the Bulgars who, under cover of military exigencies, sought to realize their well-known ambitions at the expense of Greece. Their frequent misdeeds had already irritated Greek public opinion to such a degree that he could not answer for the consequences, should the project be carried out. The appearance of Bulgarian troops in Macedonia would create a national ferment of which Venizelos and the Entente Powers would take advantage in order to overthrow the present Ministry and force Greece into war.[3]

Impressed by these arguments, the German Government did its utmost to induce Falkenhayn to abandon his scheme; von Jagow even going so far as to draw up, with the assistance of the Greek Minister at Berlin, a remonstrance to the Chief of the General Staff. But it was all to no purpose. The political department had very little influence over the High Command. Falkenhayn insisted on the accuracy of his information, and adhered to his own point of view. He could not understand, he said, why a German move should cause any special excitement in Greece, seeing that it was directed against the French and the English, who paid no heed to Greek susceptibilities, and he irritably complained that, while Greece allowed the Entente full liberty to improve its position day by day, she raised the greatest obstacles to Germany's least demand.[4] In brief, from being more or less pliant, the Chief of the General Staff became rigid: he would no longer submit to rebuffs and denials. Strategic reasons, perhaps, had brought about this change; perhaps the Bulgars were the instigators. It is impossible to say,

[1] *White Book*, Nos. 92, 93, 96–102.
[2] *White Book*, No. 104.
[3] *White Book*, Nos. 106, 111, 113.
[4] *White Book*, Nos. 110, 112, 116.

and it does not much matter. The essential fact is that the man had power and meant to use it.

There followed a formal communication from the German and Bulgarian Ministers at Athens to M. Skouloudis, stating that their troops were compelled in self-defence to push into Greek territory, and assuring him that neither the integrity and sovereignty of Greece nor the persons and property of the inhabitants would in any way suffer by this temporary occupation. M. Skouloudis took note of this decision without assenting to it, but also without protesting: he felt, he said, that a premature protest could only lose Greece the guarantees of restoration and reparation offered. Sufficient unto the day the evil thereof: confronted with powerful Empires in the height of their military strength, he had done all that was humanly possible to ward off their advance, and, though unsuccessful in the end, he had at least obtained a solemn pledge of their ultimate retreat. The protest came a few days later, when the invasion actually took place.[1]

On 26 May, a Germano-Bulgarian force appeared at Rupel. The garrison, in accordance with its instructions of 27 April (O.S.) to resist any advance beyond 500 metres from the frontier line, fired upon the invaders and drove them back. But on fresh orders reaching it to follow the instructions of 9 March (O.S.)—which prescribed that, in the event of a foreign invasion, the Greek troops should withdraw—it surrendered the fort.[2]

In Entente circles it had long been assumed that, let the King and his Government do what they liked, the instant a Bulgarian foot stepped over the border, soldiers and civilians would fly to arms. Nothing of the sort happened. However painful to their feelings their orders might be, the soldiers obeyed them. Among the civilians also the shock, severe as it was, produced no demoralization. The Greek people generally understood that the surrender of Rupel was an inevitable consequence of the landing at Salonica. Nevertheless, the fears of M. Skouloudis that

[1] *White Book*, Nos. 117–20, 134, 135; Skouloudis's *Apantesis*, pp. 25–6.

[2] *White Book*, Nos. 95, 105, 126, 130–33, 137. The instructions of 27 April had been issued chiefly in consequence of information that bands of Bulgarian irregulars (*Comitadjis*) were at that moment preparing to cross the frontier. Skouloudis's *Apantesis*, p. 23.

a Bulgarian invasion would place a powerful weapon in the hands of his opponents were abundantly fulfilled.

By representing the event as the result of a treacherous collusion between Athens and the Central Powers,[1] M. Venizelos roused the Allied nations to fury. Their Governments, of course, knew better. Even in France official persons recognized that the occupation of Rupel was a defensive operation which Greece could not oppose by force. Yet they had hoped that she would have averted it by diplomatic action. As it was, they concluded that she must have received from the Central Powers very strong assurances that the occupied territories would be restored to her. In any case, they said, the Skouloudis Cabinet's passivity in face of a move calculated to prejudice the Allies' military position contradicted its oft-repeated protestations of a benevolent neutrality towards them.[2]

M. Skouloudis hastened to vindicate his conduct. He did not tell the Entente Powers, as he might have done, that he had by diplomatic action put off an invasion for six months, and thus enabled them to increase their forces and consolidate their position. Neither did he tell them another thing which in itself formed an ample refutation of the charge of collusion—that on 27 April (10 May) General Sarrail had occupied the frontier fort Dova-tépé with the tacit consent of the Hellenic Government, which had deliberately excluded that fort from the instructions of resistance issued that day to its troops, and that Greek officers urged him at the same time to occupy Rupel, dwelling on the military importance of the fort for the defence of Eastern Macedonia; an advice which the French General had ignored on the ground that Rupel lay altogether outside the Allies' zone of action, and he could not spare the troops necessary for its occupation.[3]

[1] The charge was supported by garbled "extracts" from the instructions to the Greek troops (the full texts of which may now be read in the *White Book*), published in Paris. See the *Saturday Review*, 10 Sept., 1921, pp. 321–2, citing the *Petit Parisien* of Dec., 1916.

[2] *White Book*, Nos. 140, 146.

[3] Sarrail, p. 104. Anyone familiar with the political and psychological atmosphere would have seen that the Greeks were anxious to keep the Bulgars out by inducing the French to forestall them.

The Greek Premier simply said that his Government's passivity was in strict accord with the explicit declarations of its policy and intentions, enunciated at the very outset, ratified by the Agreement of 10 December, 1915, and reiterated *ad nauseam* to the Entente Ministers—viz., that "should the Allied troops by their movements bring the war into Greek territory, the Greek troops would withdraw so as to leave the field free to the two parties to settle their differences." Far from changing his attitude, he once more, in reply to M. Briand's threat that, "if the Bulgarian advance continued without resistance there might ensue the most serious consequences for the Hellenic Government," emphatically declared: "Resistance is only possible if we abandon our neutrality, and the demand that we should resist is therefore in flagrant contradiction to the oft-repeated protestations of the Entente Powers that they have neither the wish nor the intention to force us into the War." Nor could he understand how they could think of blaming Greece for receiving from the Central Powers the same assurances of eventual restoration as those given by themselves.[1]

M. Skouloudis spoke in vain. Paris had made up its mind to treat the incident as indicating a new and malevolent orientation against which it behoved the Allies to protect themselves. Accordingly, on 1 June, M. Briand authorized General Sarrail to proclaim a state of siege at Salonica.

General Sarrail, who had long sought to be freed from the trammels of Greek sovereignty—"*et à être maître chez moi*"—but had hitherto been denied his wish by the British Government, jumped at the permission, and he improved upon it with a personal touch, trivial yet characteristic. So far back as 27 April he had recommended that "we must strike at the head, attack frankly and squarely the one enemy—the King." Pending an opportunity to strike, he seized the occasion to slight. He fixed the proclamation for 3 June, King Constantine's name day, which was to be celebrated at Salonica as in every other town of the kingdom with a solemn *Te Deum*.

But Sarrail detected in their advice a subtle contrivance either to find out his plans, or to cast the blame for the loss of Rupel on him!

[1] *White Book*, No. 142.

The British General, Milne, who had arranged to assist at the *Te Deum*, after vainly trying to obtain at least a postponement of the date out of respect for the King, found himself obliged to yield. And so on that festal morning martial law was proclaimed. Allied detachments with machine guns occupied various strategic points, the public offices were taken possession of, the chiefs of the Macedonian gendarmerie and police were expelled, and the local press was placed under a French censor. All this, without any preliminary notification to the Hellenic Government, which expressed its indignation that a French General, forgetting the most elementary rules of courtesy and hospitality, thought fit to choose such a moment for inaugurating a state of things that formed at once a gratuitous affront to the sovereign of the country and a breach of the terms of the Agreement of 10 December.[1]

But this was only a prelude, followed on 6 June by a blockade of the Greek coasts, established in pursuance of orders from Paris and London—*pour peser sur la Grèce et lui montrer qu'elle était à notre merci.*[2] Even this measure, however, did not seem to M. Briand sufficient. He advocated intervention of a nature calculated to disarm our enemies and to encourage our friends. His views did not meet with approval in London: Sir Edward Grey had "*des scrupules honorables*," which M. Briand set himself to overcome by pen and tongue. The Entente Powers, he argued, were protectors of Greece—guarantors of her external independence and internal liberty. The Greek Government was bound to defend its territories with them against all invaders, and it had broken that obligation. Further, it had sinned by violating the Constitution. On both counts the Entente Powers had not only the right but the duty to intervene. Thus only could they justify, in the eyes of the Greek people, the blockade by which the whole population suffered, and which it would otherwise not understand. There was no time to lose: the dignity of France demanded swift and drastic action: the Athenians had gone so far as to ridicule in a cinema the

[1] *Journal Officiel*, p. 72; Sarrail, pp. 105–8, 112, 355–7; *White Book*, Nos. 142, 145.

[2] Sarrail, p. 113.

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uniform of the heroes of Verdun. If England would not join her, she must act alone.[1]

These arguments—particularly, one may surmise, the last—overcame Sir Edward Grey's honourable scruples; and on 16 June a squadron was ordered to be ready to bombard Athens, while a brigade was embarked at Salonica for the same destination. Before the guns opened fire, hydroplanes would drop bombs on the royal palace; then the troops would land, occupy the town, and proceed to arrest, among others, the royal family. Such were the plans elaborated under the direction of the French Minister at Athens, much to the joy of General Sarrail, who had said and written again and again that "nothing could be done unless the King was put down."[2]

All arrangements for this "demonstration" completed, on 21 June the Entente Powers, "ever animated by the most benevolent and amicable spirit towards Greece"—it is wonderful to what acts these words often form the accompaniment—had the honour to deliver to her Government a Note by which they demanded:

1. The immediate and total demobilization of the Army.
2. The immediate replacement of the present Cabinet by a business Ministry.
3. The immediate dissolution of the Chamber and fresh elections.
4. The discharge of police officers obnoxious to them.

They admitted neither discussion nor delay, but left to the Hellenic Government the entire responsibility for the events that would ensue if their just demands were not complied with at once.

As M. Briand had anticipated, the sight of our warships' smoke quickened the Greek Government's sense of justice. King Constantine promptly complied, the "demonstration," to the intense disappointment of M. Guillemin and General Sarrail, was adjourned, and a Ministry of a non-political character, under the leadership of M. Zaimis, was appointed to carry on the administration of the country until the election of a new Chamber.[3]

The event marked a new phase in the relations between

[1] *Journal Officiel*, pp. 72–3.
[2] Sarrail, pp. 115–24; Du Fournet, pp. 91–3.
[3] *Journal Officiel*, p. 99; Sarrail, pp. 125–7; Du Fournet, p. 93.

Greece and the Entente Powers. Henceforth they appear not as trespassers on neutral territory, but as protectors installed there, according to M. Briand, by right—a right derived from treaties and confirmed by precedents.[1] Concerning the treaties all comment must be postponed till the question comes up in a final form. But as to the precedents, it may be observed that the most pertinent and helpful of all was one which M. Briand did not cite.

At the time of the Crimean War, Greece, under King Otho, wanted to fight Turkey, and realize some of her national aspirations with the assistance of Russia. But France and England, who were in alliance with Turkey against Russia, would not allow such a thing. Their Ministers at Athens told King Otho that strict neutrality was the only policy consonant with the honour and the interest of Greece: while hostilities lasted her commerce, as a neutral nation, would flourish, and by earning their goodwill she could, at the conclusion of peace, hope not to be forgotten in the re-making of the map of Eastern Europe. For refusing to listen to these admonitions King Otho was denounced as a pro-Russian autocrat, and the Allies landed troops at the Piræus to compel obedience to their will.

Once more a Greek sovereign had drawn down upon himself the wrath of the Protecting Powers, with the traditional charges of hostile tendencies in his foreign and autocratic tendencies in his domestic conduct, for daring to adopt an independent Greek policy.

This time the three Powers were united in a common cause, which necessitated unity of action on all fronts. But it would be an error to imagine that this unity of action rested everywhere upon a community of views or of ulterior aims. Certainly such was not the case in Greece. France had her own views and aims in that part of the world. M. Briand was bent on bringing Greece into the War, not because he thought her help could exercise a decisive influence over its course, but because he wanted her to share in the spoils under French auspices: he considered it France's interest to have in the Eastern Mediterranean a strong Greece closely tied to her.[2]

[1] *Journal Officiel*, pp. 72, 73.
[2] Romanos to Zaimis, Paris, 26 Aug./8 Sept., 1916.

That programme France intended to carry through at all costs and by all means. England and Russia, for the sake of the paramount object of the War, acquiesced and co-operated. But the acquiescence was compulsory and the co-operation reluctant. The underlying disaccord between the three Allies reflected itself in the demeanour of their representatives at Athens.

M. Guillemin, the French Minister, stood before the Greek Government violently belligerent. Brute force, accentuated rather than concealed by a certain irritating finesse, seemed to be his one idea of diplomacy, and he missed no conceivable opportunity for giving it expression: so much so that after a time the King found it impossible to receive him. Sir Francis Elliot, the British Minister, formed a pleasing contrast to his French colleague: a scrupulous and courteous gentleman, he did not disguise his repugnance to a policy involving at every step a fresh infringement of a neutral nation's rights. As it was, he endeavoured to moderate proceedings which he could neither approve nor prevent. Prince Demidoff, a Russian diplomat of amiable manners, seconded Sir Francis Elliot's counsels of moderation and yielded to M. Guillemin's clamours for coercion.[1]

It is important to bear this disaccord in mind in order to understand what went before and what comes hereafter: for, though for the most part latent, it was always present; and if it did not avert, it retarded the climax.

[1] See Du Fournet, pp. 110–11.

CHAPTER X

IN their Note of 21 June the Allies assured the Greek people that they acted for its sake as much as for their own. One half of the preamble was taken up by their grievances against the Skouloudis Government—its toleration of foreign propagandists and its connivance at the entry of enemies, which formed a fresh menace for their armies. The other half was devoted to the violation of the Constitution by the dissolution of two Chambers within less than a year and the subjection of the country to a regime of tyranny. Their aim, they said, was to safeguard the Greek people in the enjoyment of its rights and liberties.[1]

These generous sentiments left the Greek people strangely cold. Indeed, the absence of any manifestations of popular joy at the Allies' success was as striking as had been the manifestations of resentment at the means employed. The only persons who did applaud the action were the persons whose party interests it served. The Venizelist Press hailed the triumph of violence as a victory for legality. M. Venizelos addressed to M. Briand his felicitations, and gave public utterance to his gratitude as follows: "The Note solved a situation from which there was no other issue. The just severity of its tone, the sincerity of its motives, its expressly drawn distinction between the Greek people and the ex-Government, give it more than anything else a paternal character towards the people of this country. The Protecting Powers have acted only like parents reclaiming a son's birthright."[2]

Pared down to realities, the aim of the Protecting Powers was to bring their protégé to power and Greece into the War. The demobilization of the army, which stood first on their list, was the first step to that end. M. Venizelos

[1] *Journal Officiel*, p. 99.
[2] The *Daily Mail*, 24 June, 1916.

had been asserting that the people were still with him, and, given a chance, would uphold his policy, but that chance was denied them by the mobilization. With a pardonable ignorance of the people's feelings, and also, it must be owned, with a too naïve confidence in the accuracy of the People's Chosen, the Allies had decided to act on this assumption: an assumption on which M. Venizelos himself was most reluctant to act.

We have it on his own evidence that he looked for a solution of his difficulties, not to an election, but to a revolution. Further, he has told us that, eager as he might be for a revolutionary stroke, he could not lose sight of the obstacles. To those who held up French revolutions as a model, he pointed out that the analogy was fallacious: in France "long years of tyranny had exasperated the people to its very depths. In Greece the people had a king who, only two years earlier, had headed his armies in two victorious campaigns."[1] So he scouted the idea of intervention at Athens, convinced that any attack on the Crown would spell destruction to himself.[2] His project was to steal to Salonica and there, under General Sarrail's shield, to start a separatist movement "directed against the Bulgars, but not against the king," apparently hoping that the Greek troops in Macedonia, among whom his apostles had been busy, fired by anti-Bulgar hate, would join him and drag king and country after them. This project had been communicated by the French Minister at Athens to General Sarrail on 31 May:[3] but, as the British Government was not yet sufficiently advanced to countenance sedition,[4] M. Venizelos and his French confederate saw reason to abandon it for the present.

Thus all concerned were committed to a test of the real desires of the Greek people by a General Election, which they declared themselves anxious to bring off without delay—early in August. This time there would be no ambiguity about the issue: although the Allies in their Note, as was proper and politic, had again disclaimed any

[1] The *New Europe*, 29 March, 1917.
[2] Du Fournet, p. 91.
[3] Sarrail, pp. 107, 354–5.
[4] "*L'Angleterre avait mis son veto.*"—Sarrail, p. 153.

wish or intention to make Greece depart from her neutrality, M. Venizelos proclaimed that he still adhered to his bellicose programme, and that he was more confident of victory than ever[1]: had not the Reservists been set free to vote, and were not those ardent warriors his enthusiastic supporters? With this cry—perhaps in this belief—he entered the arena.

It was a lively contest—rhetoric and corruption on both sides reinforced by terrorism, to which the Allies' military authorities in Macedonia, and their Secret Service at Athens, whose efficiency had been greatly increased by the dismissal of many policemen obnoxious to them, and by other changes brought about through the Note of 21 June, contributed of their best.

But even veteran politicians are liable to error. The Reservists left their billets in Macedonia burning with anger and shame at the indignities and hardships which they had endured. The Allies might have had among those men as many friends as they pleased, and could have no enemies unless they created them by treating them as such. And this is just what they did: from first to last, the spirit displayed by General Sarrail towards the Greek army was a spirit of insulting distrust and utterly unscrupulous callousness.

Unable to revenge themselves on the foreign trespasser, the Reservists vowed to wreak their vengeance on his native abettor. They travelled back to their villages shouting: "A black vote for Venizelos!" and immediately formed leagues in the constituencies with a view to combating his candidates. The latter did all they could to exploit the national hate for the Bulgars and the alarm caused by their invasion. But fresh animosities had blunted the edge of old feelings: besides, had not the Bulgarian invasion been provoked by the Allies' occupation, and who was responsible for that occupation? For the rest, the question, as it presented itself to the masses, was no longer simply one of neutrality or war. Despite M. Venizelos's efforts, and thanks to the efforts of his adversaries, his breach with the King had become public, and

[1] See his statement to the Correspondent of the Paris *Journal*, in the *Hesperia*, of London, 7 July, 1916.

the division of the nation had now attained to the dimensions of a schism—Royalists against Venizelists. Nor could there be any doubt as to the relative strength of the rival camps.

Thus, by a sort of irony, the action which was designed to clothe Venizelos with new power threatened to strip him of the last rags of prestige that still clung to his name. Therefore, the elections originally fixed for early in August were postponed by the Entente to September.

Such was the internal situation, when external events brought the struggle to a head.

With the accession of 120,000 Serbs, 23,000 Italians, and a Russian brigade, the Allied army in Macedonia had reached a total of about 350,000 men, of whom, owing to the summer heats and the Vardar marshes, some 210,000 were down with malaria.[1] Nevertheless, under pressure from home and against his own better judgment,[2] General Sarrail began an offensive (10 August). As might have been foreseen, this display of energy afforded the Bulgars an excuse, and the demobilization of the Greek forces an opportunity, for a fresh invasion. M. Zaimis, in view of the contingency, imparted to General Sarrail his Government's intention to disarm the forts in Eastern Macedonia, so that he might forestall the Bulgars by occupying them. But again, as in May, the Frenchman treated the friendly hint with scornful suspicion.[3] There followed a formal notice from the German and Bulgarian Ministers at Athens to the Premier, stating that their troops were compelled, by military exigencies, to push further into Greek territory, and repeating the assurances given to his predecessor on the occupation of Fort Rupel.[4]

The operation was conducted in a manner which belied these assurances. Colonel Hatzopoulos, acting Commandant of the Fourth Army Corps, reported from his headquarters at Cavalla that the Bulgarian troops were accompanied by irregular bands which indulged in murder

[1] Du Fournet, p. 99.
[2] Caclamanos, Paris, 1/14 June, 1916.
[3] M. Zaimis's deposition on oath at the judicial investigation instituted by the Venizelos Government in 1919. Cp. Sarrail, p. 152.
[4] *White Book*, Nos. 158–60.

and pillage; that the inhabitants of the Serres and Drama districts were fleeing panic-stricken; and that the object of the invaders clearly was, after isolating the various Greek divisions, to occupy the whole of Eastern Macedonia. He begged for permission to call up the disbanded reservists, and for the immediate dispatch of the Greek Fleet. But the Athens Government vetoed all resistance, and the invasion went on unopposed.[1] By 24 August the Bulgars were on the outskirts of Cavalla.

Truth to tell, the real authors of the invasion were the Allies and M. Venizelos, who, by forcing Greece to disarm before the assembled enemy, practically invited him. But it was not to be expected that they should see things in this light. They, as usual, saw in them a new "felony"—yet another proof of King Constantine's desire to assist the Kaiser and defeat M. Venizelos[2]—and acted accordingly.

M. Venizelos opened the proceedings with a meeting outside his house on Sunday, 27 August, when he delivered from his balcony a direct apostrophe to the King—an oration which may have lost some of its dramatic effect by being read out of a carefully prepared manuscript, but which on that account possesses greater documentary value:

"Thou, O King, hast become the victim of conscienceless counsellors who have tried to destroy the work accomplished by the Revolution of 1909, to bring back the previous maladministration, and to satisfy their passionate hate for the People's Chosen Leader. Thou art the victim of military advisers of limited perceptions and of oligarchic principles. Thou hast become the victim of thy admiration for Germany, in whose victory thou hast believed, hoping through that victory to elbow aside our

[1] *White Book*, Nos. 161–5.

[2] "The King, having no illusions as to the result of an election," says M. Venizelos, in the *New Europe*, 29 March, 1917, "organized, in connivance with the Germans and Bulgarians, the invasion of Western and Eastern Macedonia. As the Liberals thus lost about sixty seats, the King might hope . . . to secure at least some semblance of success at the coming elections." On the first opportunity that the people of Macedonia, Eastern and Western alike, had of expressing their opinion—at the elections of 14 Nov., 1920—they did not return a single Venizelist.—See Reuter, Athens, 15 Nov., 1920.

free Constitution and to centre in thy hands the whole authority of the State." After enumerating the disastrous results of these errors—"instead of expansion in Asia Minor, Thrace, and Cyprus, a Bulgarian invasion in Macedonia and the loss of valuable war material"—the orator referred to the elections and warned the King that persistence in his present attitude would involve danger to the throne: "The use of the august name of Your Majesty in the contest against the Liberal Party introduces the danger of an internal revolution." The discourse ended with another scarcely veiled menace to the King: "If we are not listened to, then we shall take counsel as to what must be done to rescue all that can be rescued out of the catastrophe which has overtaken us."[1]

It was not an empty threat. The Chief spoke on Sunday, and on Wednesday his followers at Salonica rose up in revolt and, supported by General Sarrail, took possession of the public offices, set up a revolutionary committee under a Cretan, and launched a war proclamation for Macedonia on the side of the Entente. The Royalist troops, after some fighting, were besieged in their barracks, starved into surrender, and finally shipped off to the Piræus, while many civil and ecclesiastical personages were thrown into prison. The French General received notice that M. Venizelos himself would arrive on 9 September to take command of the movement.[2]

Concurrently with this first product of the plot hatched between M. Venizelos and M. Guillemin in May, was carried on the more orthodox mode of action inaugurated by the Allied Governments in June. At the news of the Bulgarian invasion, the French Minister at Athens felt or feigned unbounded fear—*tout était à redoubter:* even a raid by Uhlans to the very gates of the capital—and asked Paris for a squadron to be placed at his disposal. Paris did what it could. On 26 August Admiral Dartige du Fournet was ordered to form a special squadron and proceed against Athens according to the plans drawn up

[1] For the Greek original, see the *Hesperia*, 1 Sept., 1916. A much longer text, apparently elaborated at leisure, with a colourless English translation, was published by the Anglo-Hellenic League.

[2] Sarrail, pp. 152–4; Official statement by the Revolutionary Committee, Reuter, Salonica, 31 Aug., 1916.

in June. He immediately left Malta at the head of thirty-four ships, and on the 28th arrived at Milo, where he found a British contingent of thirty-nine ships awaiting him. The joint armada thus formed was believed to be strong enough to preclude all danger of resistance. For all that, every precaution was taken to secure to it the advantage of a surprise, though in vain: its size and the proximity of its objective rendered secrecy impossible.

Four days were wasted in idleness—a delay due to England's scruples. But at last all was ready; and on the morning of 1 September the Allied Fleet stood out to sea; seventy-three units of every description, the big ships in single file, flanked by torpedo-boats, steaming bravely at the rate of fifteen knots, and leaving behind them a track of white-crested waves that stretched to the very edge of the horizon: *le coup d'œil est impressionant.*

All arrangements for battle had been made, and each contingent had its special rôle assigned to it: only the Intelligence Services, being otherwise occupied, had failed to furnish any information about Greek mines and submarines. It was therefore necessary to be more than ever careful. But the six hours' voyage was accomplished safely, and not until the armada cast anchor at the mouth of the Salamis Strait did it meet with a tangible token of hostility. The Greek Admiral commanding the Royal Fleet, before the arsenal of Salamis—a force composed of two ironclads, one armoured cruiser, eighteen torpedo-boats and two submarines—failed to bid the Allies welcome: a breach of international rules which was duly resented and remedied.

The expedition had for its objects: (1) To seize a dozen enemy merchantmen which had taken refuge since the beginning of the War in the harbours of Eleusis and the Piræus; (2) to obtain the control of Greek posts and telegraphs; (3) to procure the expulsion of enemy propagandists, and the prosecution of such Greek subjects as had rendered themselves guilty of complicity in corruption and espionage on the wrong side.

Of the first operation, which was conducted to a successful issue that same evening "with remarkable activity" by one of Admiral Dartige's subordinates, no justification was attempted: we needed tonnage and took it. The

pretext for the second was that the Allies had heard "from a sure source" that their enemies were furnished by the Hellenic Government with military information. So serious a charge, if made in good faith, should have been supported by the clearest proofs. Yet even Admiral Dartige, whose disagreeable duty it was to prefer it, bitterly complained that "he never received from Paris a single proof which could enlighten him." On the other hand, he did receive abundant enlightenment about the "sure source": the Russian Minister needed to send a cipher message to the American Embassy at Constantinople which was entrusted with Russian interests, and, the Hellenic Government readily agreeing to transmit it through its Legation at Pera, Prince Demidoff, with the consent of his Entente colleagues, proceeded to make use of the Athens wireless for that purpose. Within forty-eight hours the Admiral received from Paris an excited telegram asking him what measures he had taken to prevent the Hellenic Government from "violating its engagements." The rebuke, explains the Admiral, was the result of a sensational report from the head of the French Secret Intelligence at Athens, denouncing the above transaction as an example of "the bad faith of the Greeks." On this pretext all the means by which the Hellenic Government could communicate with its representatives abroad and reply to the attacks of its enemies passed under the Allies' control.

Somewhat less neat were the methods adopted to secure the third object of the expedition. The Secret Services had compiled a voluminous register of undesirable persons out of which they drew up a select list of candidates for expulsion and prosecution. Unfortunately, despite their industry, it teemed with embarrassing errors: individuals put down as Germans turned out to be Greeks; and the suspects of Greek nationality included high personages, such as M. Streit, ex-Minister for Foreign Affairs, General Dousmanis and Colonel Metaxas, ex-Chiefs of the General Staff, and so on. At last an expurgated list was approved and carried out summarily.[1] Some of the criminals escaped punishment by transferring their services from the German to the French and British propagandas; for,

[1] Du Fournet, pp. 99–104, 122–4, 127, 129.

while to intrigue with the former was to commit a crime, to intrigue with the latter was to perform a meritorious deed.

There the Allies and M. Venizelos stopped for the moment, hoping that Rumania's entry into the War, which had just taken place, would induce Greece to do likewise.

CHAPTER XI

RUMANIA'S policy had always been regarded by the Greeks as of capital importance for their own; and as soon as she took the field, King Constantine, though suffering from a recrudescence of the malady that had nearly killed him in the previous year, set to work to consider whether her adhesion did not make such a difference in the military situation as to enable him to abandon neutrality. Two or three days before the arrival of the Allied Fleet he had initiated conversations in that sense with the Allied Ministers.[1]

Simultaneously the question of a war Government came up for discussion; the actual Cabinet being, by order of the Allies, a mere business Ministry charged only to carry on the administration until the election of a new Parliament.

Two alternatives were suggested. The first, which found warm favour in Entente circles, was that M. Zaimis should lay down the cares of office and make place for M. Venizelos. Constantine was advised to "bend his stubborn will to the inevitable and remain King of the Hellenes"—that is, to become an ornamental captain—by abandoning the ship of State to the management of the wise Cretan. "It is now possible," the homily ran, "that the precipitation of events will prevent the return of M. Venizelos by the voice of the electorate." But that did not signify: "M. Venizelos can count on the backing of nine-tenths of the nation, given a semblance of Royal support."[2] In less trenchant language, the British Minister at Athens expounded the same thesis.

But Constantine showed little inclination to perform this noble act of self-effacement. On no account would

[1] See *Constantine I and the Greek People*. By Paxton Hibben, an American journalist who took part in these diplomatic transactions, pp. 281–90.

[2] See Crawfurd Price, Athens, 1 Sept., in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 15 Sept., 1916.

he have a dictator imposed upon him to shape the fortunes of Greece according to his caprice, unfettered by " military advisers of limited perceptions." If Greece was to have a dictator, the King had said long ago, he would rather be that dictator; though he had no objection to a Cabinet with a Venizelist admixture. In fact, he insisted on M. Venizelos accepting a share in the responsibility of war, either by himself sitting in the Cabinet or by permitting three of his friends to represent him in it. " It will not do," he said frankly, " to have his crowd standing out, trying to break up the army and making things difficult by criticizing the Government."[1]

The other alternative was that M. Zaimis should be invested with political functions; but for this the consent of the Allies and of their protégé was needed. The latter, in his oration of 27 August, had magnanimously declared himself willing, provided his policy were adopted, to leave the execution of it in the hands of M. Zaimis, whose honesty and sincerity remained above all suspicion: " the Liberal Party," he had said, " are prepared to back this Cabinet of Affairs with their political authority." On being asked by M. Zaimis to explain precisely what he meant, M. Venizelos broached the subject of elections. As already seen, he and the Allies had reason to regret and to elude the test which they had exacted. It was, therefore, not surprising that M. Venizelos should stipulate, with the concurrence of the Entente Ministers, that the elections now imminent be postponed to the Greek Kalends.[2] By accepting this condition, M. Zaimis obtained a promise of support; and straightway (2 Sept.) proceeded to sound London and Paris.

Before making any formal proposal, he wanted to know if the Western Powers would at least afford Greece the money and equipment which she required in order to prepare with a view to eventual action. England welcomed these overtures, convinced that thus all misunderstandings between Greece and the Allies would vanish;

[1] Paxton Hibben, p. 289.

[2] " *La question de la dissolution de la Chambre fut écartée. . . . De plus tout faisait supposer que de nouvelles élections ne seraient pas favorables au parti venizéliste, dont la cause était si intimement liée à la nôtre.*"—Du Fournet, pp. 121–2; Paxton Hibben, pp. 278–9, 306–7.

but, before giving a definite reply, she had to communicate with France. France manifested the greatest satisfaction; but M. Briand urged that there was no time for negotiations: the vital interests of Greece demanded immediate action: she should hasten to make a formal declaration without delay; after which he would do all that was necessary to provide her, as soon as possible, with money and material. M. Zaimis in his very first dispatch had said: "Unfortunately the state of our finances and of our military organization does not permit us to think of immediate action: we need a certain delay for preparation"; and all the exhortations of M. Briand to leap first and look afterwards failed to move him. Besides the matter of equipment—a matter in which the Entente Powers, owing to their own necessities, had been the reverse of liberal to their small allies, as Belgium and Servia had already found, and Rumania was about to find to her cost—there was another point Greek statesmen and strategists had to weigh very carefully before committing themselves: would Rumania co-ordinate her military action with theirs? Unless she were inclined and able to divert enough forces from the Austro-Hungarian to the Bulgarian frontier, her entry into the War could not be of any help to them. So, after nine days' correspondence, we find M. Zaimis still writing: "When the English answer arrives, the Royal Government will take account of it in the examination in which it will engage before taking a definite decision—a decision which will be subordinated to its military preparations and to the course of war operations in the East."[1]

Directly afterwards (11 Sept.) M. Zaimis resigned "for reasons of health." These reasons convinced no one: everyone agreed in ascribing his withdrawal to his discovery that he was the victim of duplicity; but as to whose duplicity, opinions differed. According to M. Venizelos, while the conversations about entering the War went on, King Constantine, in consequence of a telegram from the

[1] Zaimis to Greek Legations, Paris and London, 20 Aug./2 Sept.; Rome, Bucharest, Petrograd, 29 Aug./11 Sept. Romanos, Paris, 20 Aug./2 Sept., 22 Aug./4 Sept., 25 Aug./7 Sept., 26 Aug./8 Sept. Gennadius, London, 22 Aug./4 Sept., 25 Aug./7 Sept., 1916.

Kaiser assuring him that within a month the Germans would have overrun Rumania and flung Sarrail's army into the sea, and asking him to hold out, reverted to the policy of neutrality; and M. Zaimis, realizing that he was being fooled, refused to play the King's game and resigned.[1] For this statement we have M. Venizelos's authority; and against it that of M. Zaimis, who, on hearing from Paris that his resignation gave rise to the supposition that the old policy had prevailed, replied: "My impression is that the Cabinet which will succeed me will not quit the line of policy which I have pursued."[2]

Another account connected the fall of the Cabinet with an incident which occurred at that critical moment and strained the situation to the utmost. In the evening of 9 September, as the Entente Ministers held a conference in the French Legation, a score of scallywags rushed into the courtyard, shouting "Long live the King! Down with France and England!" fired a few revolver shots in the air, and bolted. Immediately M. Zaimis hastened to the Legation and expressed his regrets. But that did not suffice to placate the outraged honour of the French Republic. Despite the objections of his colleagues, M. Guillemin had a detachment of bluejackets landed to guard the Legation; and next day a Note was presented to the Greek Premier demanding that the perpetrators of this grave breach of International Law should be discovered and punished, and that all Reservists' leagues should instantly be broken up. It was even proposed that the King should be asked to issue a Proclamation disavowing and condemning the demonstration. Inquiry proved that the demonstration was the work of *agents provocateurs* in the pay of the French Secret Service which acted in the interest of M. Venizelos.

Whereupon, M. Zaimis, realizing that the negotiations he was trying to conduct could not be sincere on the part of the French, begged to be relieved of his mandate. The King was loth to let him go. The British Minister was equally upset, and added his plea to that of the Sovereign. M. Zaimis said that, if M. Guillemin disavowed

[1] The *New Europe*, 29 March, 1917.

[2] Romanos, Paris, 31 Aug./13 Sept.; Zaimis, Athens, 1/14 Sept., 1916.

the intrigue and displayed a willingness to continue the negotiations in a spirit of candour, he would remain; but M. Guillemin could not bring himself to go so far.[1]

Whatever may be the truth in this matter—for, owing to lack of documentary evidence, it is impossible fully to ascertain the truth—the whole position, for a man of M. Zaimis's character, was untenable: if sense of duty had prompted him to take up the burden, common-sense counselled him to lay it down. So he resigned; and the fat was once more in the fire—and the blaze and the stench were greater than ever; for his resignation synchronized with another untoward event.

Colonel Hatzopoulos with his own and the Serres Division had for some time past been isolated at Cavalla —the Bulgars occupying the forts on one side, while the British blockaded the harbour on the other. Suddenly, upon a false report that King Constantine had fled to Larissa and Venizelos was master at Athens, the demeanour of the Bulgars, which had always been harsh, became thoroughly hostile. They strengthened their outposts, cut off the food supplies that came from Drama and Serres, and, on 6 September, demanded that the heights immediately above the town still held by the Greeks should be abandoned to them, on the plea that otherwise they would be unable to defend themselves in case of an Entente landing: refusal would be considered an unfriendly act. As his orders forbade resistance, Colonel Hatzopoulos had no choice but to yield. Thus the Greeks were reduced to absolute helplessness; and their isolation was completed on 9 September, when British sailors landed and destroyed the wireless station.

The worst was yet to come. Next morning (10 Sept.) a German officer peremptorily notified Colonel Hatzopoulos on the part of Marshal von Hindenburg that, as the Greek troops scattered over Eastern Macedonia obstructed the operations of the Bulgarian army, they should all be concentrated at Drama. Colonel Hatzopoulos, perceiving that compliance meant captivity in the hands of the Bulgars, asked that, as his instructions were that all the troops should concentrate at Cavalla, and as he could not act otherwise without orders from the King, he might be

[1] Paxton Hibben, pp. 313–19; Du Fournet, pp. 119–21, 129.

allowed to send a messenger to Athens *via* Monastir. This being refused on the ground that the journey would take too long, he pleaded his inability to decide about so grave a matter on his own initiative, but must call a council of the principal officers. Meanwhile, in order to avoid capture by the Bulgars, he asked if, should they decide to surrender, Hindenburg would guarantee their transportation to Germany with their arms. The German promised to communicate with headquarters and to let him know the answer on the following morning.

Evidently the invaders, who would formerly have been more than content with the withdrawal of the Greek forces, were now—in violation of the pledges given to Athens by the German and Bulgarian Governments—resolved on making such withdrawal impossible. It is not hard to account for this change. The pledges were given in the belief that Greece would continue neutral. This belief had been shaken not only by the Venizelist movement, but more severely still by M. Zaimis's soundings of the Entente Powers. The Greek Premier had from the first insisted on secrecy, stating among the main reasons which rendered absolute discretion imperative, "the presence in part of our territory of the eventual adversary," and "the need to extricate two divisions and a large quantity of material" from their grip.[1] Nevertheless, the Entente Press gloried in the hope that the Allies would soon have the only non-belligerent Balkan State fighting on their side, and the principal Entente news agency trumpeted abroad M. Zaimis's confidential conversations.[2] Hence the desire of the Germano-Bulgars to prevent the escape of men and material that might at any moment be used against them.

On the other hand, the Greek officers' council decided

[1] Zaimis to Greek Legations, Paris and London, 20 Aug./2 Sept., 1916. All his dispatches are marked "strictly confidential and to be deciphered by the Minister himself." The replies are to be addressed to him personally, and for greater security, must be prefaced by some meaningless groups of figures.

[2] See messages from the Athens Correspondents of *The Times* and the *Daily Chronicle*, 3 Sept.; Reuter, Athens, 9 Sept., 1916. In view of the strict censorship exercised during the war and in view of the Franco-Venizelist anxiety to rush Greece into a rupture these indiscretions can hardly be considered accidental.

to try first every means of escape, and only if that proved impossible to comply with the German demand on condition that they should be taken to Germany and not be left in the hands of the Bulgars. Accordingly, Colonel Hatzopoulos addressed a most earnest appeal to the British for vessels to get his men away to Volo or the Piræus, and, having received a promise to that effect, he secretly arranged for flight. In the night of 10 September all the men with their belongings gathered on the sea-front ready to leave. But they reckoned without the partisans of M. Venizelos in their midst. One of them, the Commandant of the Serres Division, a month ago had informed General Sarrail that he would fight on the side of the Allies,[1] and another on 5 September, in a nocturnal meeting on board a British man-of-war, had proposed to kidnap Colonel Hatzopoulos, arm volunteers, and attack the Bulgars with the aid of Allied detachments landed at Cavalla. His proposal having been rejected, it was agreed that all "patriotic" elements should be transported to Salonica. In pursuance of this agreement, only those were allowed to embark who were willing to rebel. Those who refused to break their oath of allegiance to their King were turned adrift. Some tried to gain the island of Thasos, but their boats were carried to the open sea and capsized, drowning many, the rest got back to the shore in despair.

As a last hope of escape, Colonel Hatzopoulos begged the British naval authorities, who controlled all means of communication between Cavalla and Athens, to transmit to his Government a message asking if he might surrender to the British and be interned in the isle of Thasos. The message was duly transmitted through the British Legation on 11 September, and in reply the Greek Minister of War, after an understanding with the British authorities, ordered him through the same channel to embark at once with all his men and, if possible, material for Volo, on Greek ships by preference, but if such were not available, on any other ships. Whether these orders were never forwarded, or whether they reached their destination too late, is not quite clear. It is certain, however, that during the critical hours when the fate of the unhappy soldiers hung in the balance, the British Fleet did not permit embarkation

[1] Sarrail, p. 152.

except to the few who joined the Rebellion.[1] For the loyal majority there was nothing left but the way to Drama.

Nor was any time allowed for vacillation. When, in the morning of 11 September, Colonel Hatzopoulos met the German officer, the latter handed to him a telegram from Hindenburg, guaranteeing the transport of the Greeks to Germany with their arms, where they would be treated as guests. He added that the departure from Cavalla would not be enforced for the present. But in the afternoon he intimated that this was due to a misunderstanding, and that they should leave the same night. Their efforts to escape had obviously become known to the Germans, who, taking no chances, imposed immediate departure under threat to cancel Hindenburg's guarantee. Thus, the two Greek divisions were under compulsion huddled off to Drama, whence, joined by the division stationed there, they were taken to Germany and interned at Goerlitz.[2]

Nothing that had hitherto happened served so well to blacken the rulers of Greece in the eyes of the Entente publics, and the mystery which enveloped the affair facilitated the propagation of fiction. It was asserted that the surrendered troops amounted to 25,000—even to 40,000 : figures which were presently reduced to " some 8,000 : three divisions, each composed of three regiments of 800 men each." The surrender was represented as made by order of the Athens Government : King Constantine, out of affection for Germany and Bulgaria, and hate of

[1] King Constantine has publicly taxed the Allies with not forwarding the orders (see *The Times*, 8 Nov., 1920). On the other hand, there is on record a statement by Vice-Consul Knox that the orders were forwarded from Athens and that he himself delivered them at Cavalla. Cp. Admiral Dartige du Fournet : " *Au moment ou les Grecs virent les Bulgares en marche sur Cavalla, ils voulurent embarquer leurs troupes et leur matériel. L'amiral anglais qui commandait en mer Egée leur refusa son concours, espérant sans doute les déterminer à se défendre. Quand, se rendant un compte plus exact de la situation, il donna son assentiment à cette évacuation, il était trop tard : les Bulgares entraient à Cavalla le jour même.*" —Du Fournet, p. 151.

[2] My chief sources of information concerning this event are a Report by Col. Hatzopoulos to Marshal von Hindenburg, dated " Goerlitz, 13/26 Oct., 1916," and another report drawn up at Athens in July, 1921, from the records of the judicial investigation instituted by the Venizelos Government in 1919, including the evidence of the British Vice-Consul G. G. Knox.

France and England, had given up, not only rich territories he himself had conquered, but also the soldiers he had twice led to victory.

In point of fact, as soon as the Athens Government heard of the catastrophe—and it did not hear of it until after the arrival of the first detachment in Germany—it addressed to Berlin a remonstrance, disavowing the step of Colonel Hatzopoulos as contrary to his orders, and denying Germany's right to keep him as contrary to International Law: "for Greece being in peaceful and friendly relations with Germany, the Greek troops can neither be treated as prisoners of war nor be interned, internment being only possible in a neutral country, and only with regard to belligerent troops—not vice versa." The dispatch ended with a request that "our troops with their arms and baggage be transported to the Swiss frontier, whence they may go to some Mediterranean port and return to Greece on ships which we shall send for the purpose."[1]

Berlin answered that she "was ready to meet the desire of the Greek Government, but actual and effective guarantees would have to be given that the troops under German protection would not be prevented by the Entente Powers from returning to their fatherland, and would not be punished for their loyal and neutral feeling and action."[2] This because the Entente press was angrily denouncing the step as a "disgraceful desertion" and asking "with what ignominious penalty their War Lord has visited so signal and so heinous an act of mutiny, perjury, and treason on the part of his soldiers"[3]—the soldiers who went to Germany precisely in order to avoid committing an act of mutiny, perjury, and treason. Truly, in time of war words change their meaning.

[1] *White Book*, No. 173.

[2] Telegram from Berlin reported by Reuter's Amsterdam Correspondent, 23 Sept., 1916. I find this confirmed by a dispatch from the Greek Minister at Berlin (Theotokis, Berlin, 18/31 Oct., 1916), in which he gives an account of his efforts to obtain from the German Government the return of the troops and restitution of the war material, as well as the Greek officers' protests to Hindenburg and Ludendorff against the pressure under which they had been hurried from Cavalla. It is to be regretted that M. Venizelos did not find room for this document and for Col. Hatzopoulos's illuminating Report in his *White Book*.

[3] Leading article in *The Times*, 19 Sept., 1916.

CHAPTER XII

MEANWHILE the unfortunate King of Greece was faced by a state of things which he himself describes with admirable lucidity in a dispatch to his brother Andrew, then in London, labouring, vainly enough, to obtain a fair hearing for the Royalist side, while another brother, Prince Nicholas, was engaged on a similar mission at Petrograd. The document is dated 3/16 September, 1916, and runs thus:

"The resignation of the Cabinet of M. Zaimis, who enjoyed my absolute confidence, as well as the unanimous confidence of the country, and whom the Entente Governments declared to me that they surrounded with their entire sympathy, has rendered the situation very difficult.

"I charged M. Dimitracopoulos to form a new Cabinet. He declared himself ready to continue the conversations opened recently by M. Zaimis in the hope of bringing them to a happy conclusion. Before accepting definitely, he thought it necessary to sound the views of the Powers on important questions of an internal order, and went to the *doyen* of the Diplomatic Corps, the British Minister, whence he carried away a very clear impression that, not only the coercive measures would not be raised before mobilization, but that they might be intensified, notably by direct interference in personal domestic questions, and that, even after mobilization, the measures would be only relaxed. As to the question of elections, after having demanded by the Note of 8 (21) June the dissolution of the Chamber and new elections, which we accepted, now they demand that the elections shall not take place, without, at the same time, allowing the existing Chamber to meet. M. Dimitracopoulos has laid down his mandate.

"Under these conditions the situation becomes inextricable. The military and naval authorities of the Entente foment and encourage in the country a revolution and armed sedition, and they favour by every means the

Salonica movement by continuing the vexatious measures and restricting all freedom of thought and action. The Entente Ministers paralyze all Government. Thus the country is pushed towards anarchy.

"Such conduct not only conflicts with the assurances which they have given us, but excludes all practical possibility of reconsidering our policy freely to the end of taking a decision in a favourable direction. For the rest, Greece divided would not be of any use as an ally. It is necessary that there should return in the country comparative calm and the feeling of independence, indispensable for taking extreme resolutions. It is necessary that confidence in the sympathy of the Entente should be restored. A resolution to participate in the war taken under present circumstances would run the risk of being attributed to violence and of being received with mistrust. More, that resolutions may be taken without danger of disaster, there is need of circumspection and discretion, so as not to provoke an attack from the Germano-Bulgars who are in our territory, before we are ready to lend real assistance to the Entente. A more definite declaration of principle, which would have to be kept secret in the common interest, would be of no practical value.

"Under certain circumstances, rendering the participation of Greece useful and conformable to our interests, I have already declared that I am ready to enter into the war on the side of the Entente. I am ready to envisage negotiations in this sense. But, before all, I need, that I may be able to occupy myself usefully and with a certain mental calmness with foreign questions, to see comparative quiet restored at home, and so to save the appearances of liberty of action. In this I ask, for the sake of the common interest, the Powers to give me their help.

"I have charged M. Calogeropoulos to form a Ministry: he is equally animated by the best intentions towards the Entente."

The new Premier, who had already held office with distinction as Minister of the Interior and as Minister of Finance, possessed every qualification for the delicate task entrusted to him. On the day of his accession *The Times* Correspondent wrote of him: "In the Chamber he is highly esteemed. Although he is a Theotokist, and

therefore anti-Venizelist, M. Calogeropoulos, who studied in France, declared to me that all his personal sympathies are with the Entente. He is likewise a member of the Franco-Greek League."[1] In harmony with this character was his programme: "The new Cabinet, inspired by the same policy as M. Zaimis, is resolved to pursue it with the sincere desire to tighten the bonds between Greece and the Entente Powers." This declaration, made in every Allied capital, was supplemented by a more intimate announcement in Paris and London: "Sharing the views which inspired the negotiations opened by its predecessor, the Royal Government is resolved to pursue them in the same spirit."[2]

No sooner had M. Calogeropoulos spoken than M. Venizelos set to work to cast doubts on his sincerity, with remarkable success: "M. Venizelos does not believe that the composition of the new Ministry permits of the hope that a national policy will be adopted, since it springs from a party of pro-German traditions,"[3]—this ominous paragraph was added by the *Times* Correspondent to his report the same day. And next day the British Minister, in an interview with the editor of a Venizelist journal, said: "The situation is certainly not an agreeable one. I have read in the papers the declaration of the new Premier. What has surprised me is to find that M. Calogeropoulos characterized his Ministry as a political one, whereas in their last Note the Allies required that Greece should be governed by a business Cabinet. This, as you see, makes a distinct difference."[4] Simultaneously, the Entente Press, under similar inspiration, reviled the new Cabinet as pro-German, clamoured for M. Venizelos, whom they still represented as the true exponent of the national will, threatened King Constantine with the fate of King Otho, and his country with "terrible and desperate things."[5]

[1] *The Times*, 18 Sept., 1916.
[2] Carapanos to Greek Legations, Paris, London, Rome, Petrograd, 3/16 Sept., 1916.
[3] *The Times*, *loc. cit.*
[4] Exchange Tel., Athens, 17 Sept., 1916. Cp. Romanos, Paris, 5/18 Sept.
[5] See leading articles in *The Times*, 19 Sept., and the *Morning Post*, 20 Sept., 1916.

It was in such an atmosphere that M. Calogeropoulos and his colleagues attempted to resume the conversations which M. Zaimis had opened. They realized that, since elections and like legal methods no longer commended themselves to the Allies, since they menaced the country with "terrible and desperate things," Greece might drift into chaos at any moment. They were anxious to avoid chaos. But how? A blind acceptance of the Venizelist policy of an immediate rush into the War, without regard to ways and means, might prove tantamount to burning one's blanket in order to get rid of the fleas: while saving Greece from the coercion of the French and the British, it might expose her to subjugation by the Germans and the Bulgars: the plight of Rumania afforded a fresh warning. They therefore adopted the only course open to sane men.

On 19 September Greece formally offered to the Entente Powers "to come in as soon as by their help she had accomplished the repair of her military forces, within a period fixed by common accord." But, "as her armed intervention could not, obviously, be in the interest of anyone concerned, unless it took place with chances of success, the Royal Government thinks that Greece should not be held to her engagement, if at the time fixed the Balkan theatre of war presented, in the opinion of the Allies' General Staffs themselves, such a disequilibrium of forces as the military weight of Greece would be insufficient to redress."[1]

Russia received these advances with cordiality, her Premier declaring to the Greek Minister at Petrograd that she would be happy to have Greece for an ally, and that the Tsar had full confidence in the sentiments of King Constantine. He added that he would immediately communicate with Paris and London.[2] There was the rub. French and British statesmen affected to regard the offer as a ruse for gaining time: they could not trust a Cabinet three members of which they considered to be ill-disposed towards the Entente: a "national policy"

[1] Carapanos to Greek Legations, Paris and London, 6/19 Sept., 1916.

[2] Panas, Petrograd, 14/27 Sept., 1916.

should be carried out by a "national Cabinet"—that is, by M. Venizelos.[1]

While frustrating his country's efforts to find a way out of the pass into which he had intrigued it, the Cretan and his partisans did not neglect other forms of activity. We have seen that rebellion had already broken out at Salonica. In Athens itself the walls were pasted with Venizelist newspapers in the form of placards displaying headlines such as these: "A LAST APPEAL TO THE KING!" "DRAW THE SWORD, O KING, OR ABDICATE!" It was no secret that arms and ammunition were stored in private houses, that the French Intelligence Service had a depot of explosives in a ship moored at the Piræus, and a magazine of rifles and grenades in its headquarters at the French School of Athens.[2] The Royalist journals threatened the Venizelists with condign punishment for their treasonable designs. The Venizelist journals, far from denying the charge, replied that they would be fully justified in arming themselves against the hostile Reservist Leagues. In short, the capital swarmed with conspirators, but the guardians of public order were powerless, owing to the proximity of the Allied naval guns, ready to enforce respect for the Allied flags under whose protection the conspiracy was carried on. By this time the French and British detectives had usurped the powers and inverted the functions of the police organs;[3] and the French and

[1] Romanos, Paris, 10/23 Sept. Cp. Reuter statement, London, 26 Sept., 1916. This view is crystallized in a personal dispatch from the Greek Minister at Paris to the Director of Political Affairs, at Athens: "*L'appel au pouvoir par S.M. le Roi de M. Venizélos paraît au Gouvernement français le seul moyen de dissiper la méfiance que l'attitude des conseillers de S.M. le Roi ont fait naître dans l'esprit des cercles dirigeants à Paris et à Londres. . . . L'opinion publique en France n' approuverait une alliance avec la Grèce et les avantages qui en découleraient pour nous, que si l'homme politique qui incarne l'idée de la solidarité des intérêts français et grecs était appelé au pouvoir.*"—Romanos to Politis, Paris, 29 Sept./12 Oct., 1916.

[2] Du Fournet, p. 116. Small wonder that the honest sailor's gorge rose at such proceedings: "Could I associate myself with manœuvres of this sort?" he asks in disgust. "When German arms and bombs were seized in the bag from Berlin to Christiania, when similar things were discovered at Bucharest, and were detected in the United States under Bernstorf's protection, the Allies manifested their indignation. They were a hundred times right; but what was odious in America, was it not odious in Greece?"

[3] The British Intelligence Service demonstrated its sense of

British agents, after fomenting those fatal differences which divide and degrade a people, had developed into directors of plots and organizers of sedition.

But, in spite of such encouragement, the capital—or, indeed, any part of Old Greece—had never appealed to M. Venizelos as a starting-point of sedition. He knew that only in the recently acquired and as yet imperfectly assimilated regions—regions under the direct influence of the Allies—he could hope to rebel with safety. His plan embraced, besides Salonica, the islands conquered in 1912, particularly his native Crete. In that home of immemorial turbulence his friends, seconded by British Secret Service and Naval officers, had found many retired bandits eager to resume work. Even there, it is true, public opinion was not strikingly favourable to disloyalty; but the presence of the British Fleet in Suda Bay had much of persuasion in it.[1]

Our diplomacy did not openly commit itself. Sir Francis Elliot still nursed the hope of effecting a reconciliation between the ex-Premier and his King. When, in August, a conference was secretly held at Athens between M. Venizelos and a number of Cretan conspirators, the latter carried back the depressing intelligence that British official sympathy with their project lacked the necessary degree of warmth. And again, on 11 September, when the British Consul of Canea went over to Athens with some of those conspirators, he was ordered by the British Legation to stay there, so as to avoid any suspicion of complicity. This attitude of correct reserve on the part of the British Foreign Office, however, did not prevent the British naval authorities on the spot from working out, in concert with the insurgents, a plan of operations under which some chieftains were to invest the coast towns on the land side, while our men-of-war patrolled the sea in their interest.[2]

humour and shame by furnishing its secret agents with a formal certificate of their identity to be presented at the central office of the Greek Police: one such patent of British protection was issued to an ex-spy of Sultan Abdul Hamid who had also spent six months in German pay. Besides the certificate, was issued a brassard, which the rogue might wear to protect him from arrest when breaking the Greek Law on British account. Incredible, yet true. See J. C. Lawson's *Tales of Ægean Intrigue*, p. 233.

[1] Lawson, pp. 143–66. [2] Lawson, pp. 168–78.

France, on the other hand, made no distinction between diplomatic and naval action. On 18 September M. Guillemin informed Admiral Dartige du Fournet that M. Venizelos was sailing for the islands, and orders were given for a French escort. But at the last moment M. Venizelos did not sail. He hesitated. The French Secret Service urged the National Leader to lead, instead of being prodded from behind; but he resisted their pressure and their plain speaking.[1] When questioned by the Associated Press Correspondent if there was any truth in the reports that he was going to put himself at the head of the revolutionary forces, he replied: "I cannot answer now. I must wait a little while yet and see what the Government propose to do."

It is possible that this was the reason why M. Venizelos paused irresolute on the brink. It is possible that he suffered, as the disrespectful Frenchmen hinted, from one of those attacks of timidity to which he was subject in a crisis. It is possible that the ambiguous attitude of England damped his martial spirit. For the rest, to make a revolution is a matter that may well give the strongest-minded pause. What wonder if, reckless, obstinate, and unscrupulous as he was, M. Venizelos, when faced with the irrevocable, felt the need to weigh his position, to reconsider whether the momentous step he was taking was necessary, was right, was prudent?

However, events soon put an end to his hesitation. The decisive event—the hair which turned the scale—according to M. Venizelos himself, was supplied, appropriately enough, by a barber. One day, whilst the Leader of the Liberals wrestled with his soul, a friend called and reported to him a talk he had just had with his hairdresser, "a terrible Venizelist, who spoke thus: 'We here, simple folk, say that Venizelos bears a heavy responsibility: he tells us we are going to the dogs. Eh, well then, why doesn't he stop us?' This conversation shook me deeply. My friend gone, I said to myself: 'Indeed, this barber speaks wisely, and my hesitations to discharge my duty to the end must vanish, because they may possibly spring from purely egotistical motives. Sir, I said to myself, having laid up from many struggles and many successes

[1] Du Fournet, pp. 130–1.

a capital above the average, you don't wish to risk it and think it better to sit quiet, choosing to enjoy the moral satisfaction of seeing the fulfilment of your prophecies rather than make an effort to prevent it.' "[1] It is always interesting to trace mighty events to trifling causes; and it would have been particularly pleasant to believe that the destinies of Greece for once literally stood "on a razor's edge."[2] But we will do M. Venizelos the credit of believing him less childish than he represents himself. There were weightier things "to shake" him into a decision.

On 20 September, when, according to plan, he was due in Crete, the train laid there exploded. His friends had come down from the hills thirsting for the blood of Greek and Mohammedan victims: should the massacre they meditated take place, M. Venizelos would never leave Athens alive.[3] The news was of a nature to compel him at last to take the plunge; and in the small hours of 25 September, the National Leader stole out of Greece on a ship escorted by a French torpedo-boat. His flight had been organized by the French Secret Service like a carnival masquerade, on the painful details of which, says Admiral Dartige, it would be better not to dwell.[4]

His advent in Crete had been so efficiently prepared by the British Secret Service and naval officers—without whom there would have been neither mutiny nor insurrection—that, on landing, M. Venizelos had nothing to do but instal himself in the best hotel at Canea and proclaim himself with his confederate Admiral Coundouriotis the Provisional Government.[5]

Under the fostering care of the Allied men-of-war the movement spread to Samos, Mytilene, Chios, Lemnos, and Thasos, where the constitutional operations witnessed in Crete were duly repeated. But all the other islands and the mainland—that is, the whole of the Hellenic Kingdom, with the exception of the new territories—

[1] *Orations*, p. 190.
[2] "Now, to all of us it stands on a razor's edge: either pitiful ruin for the Achaians or life." Homer, *Iliad*, X, 173.
[3] Lawson, pp. 180–9.
[4] Du Fournet, p. 131.
[5] Lawson, pp. 198–226.

adhered steadfastly to the person and the policy of their King. As for the armed forces of the Crown, Admiral Coundouriotis had hoped by his prestige, deservedly high since the Balkan wars, to bring away with him the whole or a large part of the Fleet: he brought away only two torpedo-boats and another small unit, the desertion of which was effected by a trick, "for which," says the French Admiral, "France would have cause to blush."[1]

In itself the Venizelist movement, as a disruptive force, was negligible.[2] But the co-operation of the French Republic and the British Empire invested it with an alarming significance.

M. Calogeropoulos and his colleagues who watched this rising tempest anxiously did everything they could to conjure it. Although to their offer no reply was given, on hearing informally that the Entente Powers would not accept the proffered alliance unless Greece declared war on Bulgaria at once, they signified their willingness so to do, if, content with that, the Entente would accord Greece adequate military and financial assistance during the struggle and support her territorial claims at the conclusion of peace; if, in addition, M. Briand deemed the Cabinet question of immediate importance, they were prepared to solve it definitely for the sake of restoring complete harmony between Greece and the Entente Powers.[3]

The authors of this message were given to understand that the reply would be handed to King Constantine himself, the Entente Governments declining to recognize the actual Cabinet; that it would be in the form of an ultimatum, demanding that Greece should declare war on Bulgaria within forty-eight hours unconditionally, after which they promised to supply her with money and munitions during the struggle and at the conclusion of peace to take into account her territorial claims as far as

[1] Du Fournet, p. 136.

[2] A paragraph of the Debierre Report, adopted by the French Senate on 21 Oct., 1916, may be quoted in this connexion: "*La révolution Salonicienne vue de près, n' est rien. Elle est sans racine, sans lendemain probable. Venizélos est très amoindri. La Grèce, dont les officiers et les soldats ne veulent pas se battre, est avec Constantin.*"—Mermeix, *Le Commandement Unique*, Part II, p. 60.

[3] Romanos, Paris, 14/27, 15/28 Sept.; Carapanos to Greek Legation, Paris, 15/28 Sept., 1916.

circumstances would permit; meanwhile, they demanded the formation of a new Ministry, and, failing compliance, they threatened "most energetic measures." M. Briand kindly added that he delayed the presentation of this ultimatum in order to give His Majesty the advantage of making a spontaneous gesture without the appearance of compulsion.[1]

Whereupon (3 Oct.) M. Venizelos at Canea was sounded whether, if the Calogeropoulos Cabinet made place for one ready to declare war on Bulgaria, he would insist on presiding over such a Cabinet or would be satisfied with being represented in it by some of his partisans.

These overtures may be regarded as a last attempt on the part of Athens to take the Cretan at his word. For M. Venizelos had never tired of professing his willingness to support any Government which would adopt his policy of prompt action: it was not personal power he hungered after, but national prosperity. Even at the moment of going to head a rebellion, he had not ceased to proclaim his patriotic unselfishness.[2] We have seen to what extent hitherto his actions had accorded with his professions: how adroitly he had maintained abroad the reputation, without incurring the sacrifices, of magnanimity. Once more he gave proof of the same adroitness:

"True to his previous declarations, M. Venizelos replied that he was ready to give his support and that of his party to a Government which would declare war on Bulgaria, and that he asked neither to preside over such a Government nor to be represented in it by his partisans. As a patriot and a statesman, seeking only his country's welfare," etc., etc., etc. But—"the principal followers of M. Venizelos do not believe that this new step taken by the authorities at Athens indicates a change in the right direction in the councils of the Palace. They maintain that the idea behind this *démarche* is simply to gain time. I have pressed M. Venizelos on this, and, although he did not wish to appear to be as emphatic as his followers, he had to admit to me that he had no illusions and that he remained sceptical. If King Constantine is really

[1] Romanos, Paris, 16/29, 17/30 Sept.; Gennadius, London, 17/30 Sept., 1916.

[2] See "Message from M. Venizelos," in *The Times*, 27 Sept., 1916.

sincere, he can give a proof which will allay all doubts. Let him order a mobilization at once . . . and call in M. Venizelos to form a new Government."[1]

King Constantine, instead of treating the Cretan as a rebel, still wished to treat him as a responsible citizen, and by his moderation to give him an opportunity of a decent return to legal order. But he could not, even if he wished, call to power a man in open revolt: by so doing he would alienate the loyal majority without conciliating the disloyal minority.

After thus burning the last boat that might have carried him back to legality, M. Venizelos took the first boat that travelled in the opposite direction. He left Suda Bay on 5 October, amidst the cheers of the Allied squadrons, bound for Salonica by way of Samos and Mytilene. At Samos he received a fresh token of the approval with which the Entente viewed his operations: the commander of a British man-of-war, acting on instructions, officially called on him and paid his respects.[2]

And so he reached Salonica, took up his abode at the royal residence, and with Admiral Coundouriotis and General Danglis composed a Triumvirate which, having appointed a Ministry, began to levy taxes and troops, and to negotiate for a loan.

The metamorphosis of a Prime Minister into an insurgent chief, though a remarkable phenomenon, is no matter for surprise. M. Venizelos sprang from people among whom insurrection formed the traditional method of asserting political opinions. His father was a veteran of the Greek Revolution of 1821, and passed most of his life plotting. His grandfather is supposed to have been a refugee of the earlier Greek revolt of 1770.[3] He himself had grown up amidst vivid echoes of the Cretan Rebellion of 1866. While contact with the frock-coated world of

[1] The *Daily Telegraph*, 5 Oct., 1916.

[2] The *Daily Telegraph*, 7 Oct., 1916.

[3] The authentic history of the Venizelos family begins with our hero's father; his grandfather is a probable hypothesis: the remoter ancestors with whom, since his rise to fame, he has been endowed by enthusiastic admirers in Western Europe, are purely romantic. In Greece, where nearly everyone's origin is involved in obscurity, matters of this sort possess little interest, and M. Venizelos's Greek biographers dwell only on his ascent.

modern Europe during the latter period of his career had clothed him with a statesman's proper external circumstance, it had not eradicated the primitive instincts implanted in him by heredity and fostered by environment. Sedition was in his blood, which perhaps explains the *flair*—the almost uncanny *flair*—he had for the business.

Nor did he lack experience. After sharing in one Cretan insurrection against the Sultan in 1896, he led another against Prince George in 1905. This exploit—known as the Therisos Movement—deserves special notice, for it bears a curious and most instructive analogy to the enterprise with which we are now dealing.

In 1899 M. Venizelos became a member of the first Cretan Administration appointed by the High Commissioner, Prince George—King Constantine's brother. The status of the island was provisional, and the fulfilment of the national desire for union with Greece depended partly on the policy of the Powers which had combined to act as its Protectors, partly on the prudence of the islanders themselves and of their continental kinsmen. Such was the situation when, in 1901, M. Venizelos suddenly conceived the idea of turning Crete into an autonomous principality. Prince George objected to the proposal, arguing that neither in Crete nor in Greece would public opinion approve it. M. Venizelos sounded the Hellenic Government and the Opposition, and was told by both that, from the standpoint of national interest and sentiment, his scheme was absolutely unacceptable. Nevertheless, he persevered and succeeded in forming a party to support his views. It may be, as he affirmed, that his scheme was a merely temporary expedient intended to pave the way to ultimate union. But the Greeks, interpreting it as a proposal for perpetual separation, remained bitterly hostile, and the fact that autonomy was known to be favoured in certain foreign quarters deepened their resentment. M. Venizelos was roundly denounced as a tool of foreign Powers, and Prince George was accused of complicity, and threatened with the lot of a traitor unless he dismissed him. The High Commissioner made use of the right which the Constitution of the island gave him, and M. Venizelos was dismissed (March, 1901).

A truceless war against the Administration and everyone

connected with it ensued. Prince George was attacked—not directly, but through his entourage—as a born autocrat holding in scorn the rights of the people, tyrannizing over the Press, persecuting all those who refused to bow to his will, aiming at the subversion of free institutions. At first this campaign met with more success abroad than at home. The Cretan people expressed its opinion by its vote: among the sixty-four deputies elected to the Chamber in 1903 there were only four Venizelists.

His defeat did not daunt M. Venizelos, who, after a brief repose, resumed operations. He hesitated at no calumny, at no outrageous invention, to get even with his adversaries. Charges of all kinds poured in upon the Prince. Speeches which he had never made were attributed to him, and speeches which he did make were systematically misreported and misinterpreted. At last, in 1904, when Prince George decided to visit the Governments of the Protecting Powers in order to beg them to bring about the union of Crete with Greece by stages, M. Venizelos, dropping the scheme which had lost him his popularity, rushed in with an uncompromising demand for immediate union, though he knew perfectly well that such a solution was impracticable. The Cretans knew it, too. On finding that they looked upon his change of creed with suspicion, he resolved to seize by violence what he could not gain by his eloquence. With some 600 armed partisans (out of a population of 300,000) he took to the hills (March, 1905), called for the convocation of a National Assembly to revise the Constitution, and meanwhile urged the people to boycott the impending elections. Despite his speeches and his bravoes, only 9,000 out of the 64,000 electors abstained from voting; and most of them abstained for other reasons than the wish to show sympathy with the insurgents.

The High Commissioner wrote to the Powers at the time: "If M. Venizelos was truly animated by the desire to defend constitutional institutions, he would have come before the electors with his programme and, whatever the result, he would certainly have earned more respect as a politician. But, instead of choosing the legal road to power, he preferred to stir up an insurrection, disguising his motives under the mask of 'The National Idea,' but,

as is proved by his own declarations, really inspired by personal animus and party interest. It mattered little to him how disastrous an effect this upheaval might have on the national cause by plunging the country into civil war or into fresh anarchy. Can anyone recognize in this way of acting the conduct of a genuine and serious patriot?"

M. Venizelos repelled these imputations, protesting that his movement was no way directed against the Prince. Yet it resulted in the departure of the Prince: the Powers who went to Crete to restore order entered into relations with the rebels; the manner in which these intimacies were carried on and the decisions to which they led made the Prince's position untenable, and he gave up his Commissionership in 1906. Likewise M. Venizelos affirmed that he had not stirred up an insurrection, but only headed a spontaneous outbreak of popular discontent. Yet even after his triumph he failed, in the elections of 1907, to obtain a majority.[1]

The Therisos performance in every point—plot and staging, methods and motives—was a rehearsal for the Salonica performance. Would the *dénouement* be the same? This question taxed M. Venizelos's dialectical dexterity very severely.

At the outset he repudiated as a monstrous and malicious calumny the common view that his programme was to march on Athens and to dethrone the King. His movement was directed against the Bulgars, not against the King or the Dynasty: "We are neither anti-royalist nor anti-dynastic," he declared, "we are simply patriots." Only, after the liberation of Greece from the foreign invaders, her democratic freedom should be assured by a thorough elucidation of the duties and rights of the Crown—a revision of the Constitution to be effected through a National Assembly.[2]

So spoke M. Venizelos at the outset, partly because the

[1] For one side of this affair see *Memorandum de S.A.R. Le Prince Georges de Grèce, Haut Commissaire en Crète, aux Quatre Grandes Puissances Protectrices de la Crète*, 1905. The other side has been expounded in many publications: among them, *E. Venizelos: His Life, His Work*. By Costa Kairophyla, pp. 37–65; *Eleutherios Venizelos*. By K. K. Kosmides, pp. 14–16.

[2] See *The Times*, 27 Sept.; *The Eleutheros Typos*, 23 Oct. (O.S.), 1916.

Allies, who did not want to have civil war in the rear of their armies, bade him to speak so,[1] and partly because he wished to give his cause currency by stamping upon it the legend of loyalty. He realized that for the present any suspicion that he wished to embark on a campaign against King Constantine would be fatal, and by declaring war only against the Bulgars he hoped to entice patriotic citizens anxious to help their country without hurting their sovereign. But when time proved the futility of these tactics, the same M. Venizelos avowed that his programme was, first to consolidate his position in Macedonia by breaking down resistance wherever it might be encountered, and then, "when we had gathered our forces, we meant to follow up our work, if need be by arms, on the remainder of Greek territory." If he had not given an anti-dynastic character to his enterprise, that, he naïvely explained, was "because the Entente had been good enough to promise me their indispensable aid under the express stipulation that the movement should *not* be anti-dynastic." However, the error was not irreparable: "After victory, grave internal questions will have to be solved," he said. "King Constantine, who has stepped down from the throne of a constitutional king to become a mere party chief, must accept the consequences of the defeat of his policy, just as every other defeated party chief."[2]

In other words, the Salonica sedition, though not solely revolutionary, involved a revolution within certain limits. M. Venizelos was far too astute to countenance the republican chimeras cherished by some of his followers. Republicanism, he knew well, found no favour in Greece and could expect no support from England. Therefore, with the monarchical principle he had no quarrel: his hostility was directed wholly against the person of the reigning monarch. A prince pliant to his hand would suit M. Venizelos. If he got the best of it, his avowed intention was to treat King Constantine precisely as he had treated King Constantine's brother in days gone by.

We now understand Prince George's earnestness in urging his brother, as long ago as May, 1915, to run before

[1] Du Fournet, p. 176.
[2] The *New Europe*, 29 March, 1917.

the gale : he spoke from bitter experience of the Protecting Powers and their protégé.

It is seldom that history repeats itself so accurately ; and it is more seldom still that the historian has the means of tracing so surely a rebel's progress. In most cases it is hard to decide whether the hero was guided by events which he could not have foreseen, or whether he had from the first a clear and definite goal in view. In the case of M. Venizelos this difficulty does not exist. Each of his actions, as illuminated by his past, was a step to an end ; and he has himself defined that end.

CHAPTER XIII

M. VENIZELOS had unfurled the standard of rebellion in the true spirit of his temperament and traditions. To him civil war had nothing repulsive about it: it was a normal procedure—a ladder to power. Naturally, he persuaded others, and perhaps himself, that he acted purely with the patriotic intention of devoting to the public benefit the power which, for that purpose only, it became his duty to usurp. Moved by the ambition to aggrandize Greece, he felt at liberty to use whatever means might conduce to so desirable an end. The sole question that troubled him was, whether this old ladder would serve him as faithfully as in the past. And once again the answer depended on the attitude of the "Protecting Powers."

Those Powers had hitherto blundered in all their Balkan dealings with depressing uniformity. First came the mistake about Bulgaria. The hate of the Greeks for the Bulgars was a psychological force which, properly estimated and utilized, could without any difficulty have been made to do our work for us. But that force was never properly estimated by our diplomacy. The Entente Governments, instead of enlisting it on their side, ranged it against them; thereby sacrificing Servia and estranging Greece. To that initial error was added a second. Until the truth could no longer be ignored, the Allies persisted in the egregrious fallacy that the popularity of King Constantine was as nothing compared with the popularity of M. Venizelos—to our detriment. "Two years before," observes Admiral Dartige du Fournet, "all the Greeks were the friends of France; in October, 1916, two-thirds of them were her enemies." That was the fact; and, according to the same witness—who described himself, not without reason, as "a Venizelist by profession"—the cause was this: "The mass of the people of continental

Greece was hostile to the Chief of the Liberals. When that mass saw that M. Venizelos started a sedition and that we supported him, it became plainly hostile to us."[1]

The Admiral mentions also German pressure, but he rightly regards it as a subsidiary cause. The Germans did little more than "blow on the fire kindled by our own clumsiness and violences." Baron Schenck, the director of the German propaganda at Athens, watched our coercion of King Constantine with that apparent indignation and secret joy which the faults of an enemy inspire, and when expelled by the Allies, said that he did not mind going: the Allies could be trusted to carry on his mission. They did.

What their plan was will appear from their actions. We cannot penetrate into the minds of men, and we cannot always believe their words; but their actions are open to observation and speak more truly than their lips.

As soon as he settled at Salonica, M. Venizelos applied to the Entente Powers for official recognition of his Provisional Government. They refused him this recognition: but instructed their Consuls to treat with the Provisional Government "on a *de facto* footing";[2] and, while pouring cold water upon him with one hand, with the other they gave him money. This mode of action was the result of a compromise, achieved at the Boulogne Conference, between France and her partners. A feeble and inconsequent way of doing things, no doubt. But to be consequent and powerful, a partnership must be bottomed on some common interest or sentiment; and such in the Greek question, as already explained, did not exist.

At Athens the action of the Allies was less open to the criticism of tameness.

After a life of three weeks passed in fruitless efforts to enter into relations with the Entente Powers, even by proposing to discard the Ministers obnoxious to them, the Calogeropoulos Cabinet resigned (4 Oct.), and King Constantine, having exhausted his stock of politicians, sought a candidate for the Premiership in circles which, remote from party intrigue, might have been thought immune from suspicion. Professor Lambros, who accepted the

[1] Du Fournet, pp. 132, 171.
[2] The *New Europe*, 29 March, 1917; *The Times*, 17 Oct., 1916.

mandate (8 Oct.), was known as a grave savant, generally esteemed for his kindly nature as much as for his intellectual eminence and administrative capacity. But Professor Lambros laboured under the universal disability of not being a Venizelist. Therefore, he was "believed to be Germanophile," and it was "questionable whether his Cabinet will be recognized by the Entente Powers."[1] However, in less than a week, he "established contact" with their representatives. It was "contact" in a sense of the term more familiar to soldiers than to statesmen.

On 10 October Admiral Dartige de Fournet resumed his activities by launching on the Hellenic Government an Ultimatum. Greece was summoned, within twenty-four hours, to disarm her big ships, to hand over to him all her light ships intact, and to disarm all her coast batteries, except three which were to be occupied by the Allies. In addition, the port of the Piræus, the railways, and the police were to be placed under Allied control.

The demand for her Fleet, Greece was told, arose from uneasiness about the safety of the Allied armada—a pretext that exposed itself: the Greek Fleet consisted of only five battleships dating from 1891–2, except one whose date was 1908; two cruisers, dating from 1911 and 1914; and a microscopic light flotilla. "To see there a serious danger, it would be puerile," says Admiral Dartige himself; and far from feeling elated at the success of the operation, he tells us that he "suffered at being constrained by events to use force against a neutral and weak nation." But he had to do it: though not a matter to be proud of, it was a precaution not altogether unjustifiable. He could, however, neither justify nor qualify the other measures. They involved, he says, a high-handed encroachment on the internal affairs of the country—an abuse of power pure and simple: "We admitted officially the right of Greece to neutrality, and yet we laid hands upon part of her national life, even upon the secrets of the private life of every Greek. It was the execution of the plan which the admirals assembled at Malta had repelled in March, 1916. Well might the Germanophiles point out that Germany did not act thus in Denmark, in Sweden, in Holland; that a victor would not have imposed

[1] *The Times*, dispatch from Athens, 8 Oct., 1916.

harder terms of armistice." These measures were entirely the work of the French Government: the French Admiral himself disapproved of them as much as did the Ministers of England and Russia.[1]

The Hellenic Government could not be deceived by pretexts which their very authors despised. But neither could it argue with persons accustomed to

" Decide all controversies by Infallible artillery,
And prove their doctrine orthodox By apostolic blows and knocks."

It could only protest and submit.

The Hellenic people proved less discreet. What could be the motive of such measures? they asked. Were they intended to prevent or to provoke troubles? The answer lay under their very eyes. From the moment when M. Venizelos left Athens, the Allies did everything they could to assist his partisans in following the Leader to Salonica. Their warships patrolled the coast picking up rebels, and giving them a free passage: even entertaining the more important among them as the personal guests of the Commander-in-Chief on his flagship. But now they took the movement openly under their direction. With an excess of zeal which the British Minister deplored and the French Admiral himself condemned, the French Secret Service at Athens organized convoys of insurgents which defiled through the streets of the capital escorted by French marines under French officers in uniform.[2]

The resentment of the Greeks was intense; but the consciousness of impotence served as a curb on their emotions. It is true that one day, as Allied aeroplanes flew over Athens, they were greeted with derisive shouts: " Not here; to Berlin! " another day, as a band of rebels were convoyed through the principal streets by the French, the crowds gave vent to lively protests; and every day the newspapers told the champions of Liberty and Justice what they thought of them so frankly that the French Chief of the Police Control had to warn their editors to desist on pain of suspension. But of active hostility, such as any western capital would have manifested in similar circumstances, there was no sign at Athens. The only impressive manifestations were manifestations of

[1] Du Fournet, pp. 138–9, 141–3. [2] Du Fournet, pp. 133–5, 146.

loyalty to the King, who set his subjects the example of self-restraint. At a review of the crews of the warships taken by the French, he thanked them for their fidelity and expressed the hope that they would soon be able to return to their vessels. After this quiet ceremony, bodies of citizens paraded the streets carrying portraits of their sovereign.[1]

Had there been no popular demonstrations at all, one can fancy M. Venizelos and the Allies pointing to that fact as proof of their contention that the great majority of the people remained Venizelist. As it was, they derived what profit they could from the opposite fact. The various incidents were attributed by the Anglo-French and Venizelist journals to German intrigue. The consolation which the King administered to his sailors—men who had so brilliantly disappointed the rebels' expectations by not deserting—was twisted into a defiance of the Entente. The bodies of peaceful demonstrators were exaggerated into crowds of rioters. And so, "in the interests of public order," Admiral Dartige proceeded to land reinforcements for the police: 1,200 bluejackets. Some occupied the town hall at the Piræus and the railway stations; some went to the forts on the heights; others were posted about the harbour, or were told off to patrol the streets (16 Oct.), while a detachment was quartered at Athens itself, in the Zappeion—a large exhibition building within a few hundred yards of the Royal Palace.[2]

Under such circumstances the diplomatic intercourse between the Entente and the new Greek Government went on. M. Lambros declared that he intended to continue his predecessor's policy of friendly relations with all the belligerents and of benevolent neutrality towards the Allies, dwelling on the fact that nearly everyone of his predecessors had plainly stated Greece's willingness to co-operate with the Entente on terms not contrary to her own interests, and recalling that the Calogeropoulos Ministry had set forth the conditions of co-operation, but the Entente Governments had given no reply. So the Premier spoke to the Entente representatives and asked that the coercive measures might be brought to an end,

[1] *The Times*, dispatch from Athens, 16 Oct., 1916.
[2] Du Fournet, pp. 146–8.

expressing the fear lest, should these measures go beyond a certain limit, their acceptance by Greece might become very difficult, and emphasizing the sorrow which the Greek people felt at seeing its independence fettered.[1]

England found this declaration satisfactory; but before answering it definitely, she must take counsel with her allies.[2] France, by the mouth of M. Briand, pronounced the allusion to friendly relations with all the belligerents unfortunate: she was unable to understand how Greece could maintain friendly relations with Germany and even with Bulgaria after the occupation of Eastern Macedonia.[3] And so, having taken counsel together, the Allies set forth their views in a tardy reply to King Constantine's last offer. The gist of it was contained in this phrase: "The Greek Government has several times since the beginning of the War offered to come in on our side; but its offers, and particularly the last one, were accompanied by conditions which rendered them unacceptable." The Entente Powers added that they did not want Greece, unless she declared, on her own initiative, war against Bulgaria. It was the only way to gain their confidence.[4]

In other words, Greece should take the field without any agreement, so that she should have no claims either to adequate support during the war or to compensations at the conclusion of peace: nay, it was even hoped in Paris and London that Bulgaria might yet be seduced from the Central Powers, and in that case not only would Greece gain nothing in Thrace, but might very likely lose a portion of Macedonia.[5] It was the old story—to which King Constantine could never listen. He would suffer anything rather than plunge his country into war without even an assurance of its territorial integrity. When at this juncture a well-intentioned adviser warned him that his policy might cost him his throne, he answered promptly: "I do not care about my throne. I only think of Greece."[6]

[1] Zalocostas to Greek Legations, Paris, London, Rome, Petrograd, 3/16 Oct., 1916.
[2] Gennadius, London, 6/19 Oct., 1916.
[3] Romanos, Paris, 7/20 Oct., 1916.
[4] Gennadius, London, 10/23 Oct., 1916.
[5] Romanos, Paris, 26 Aug./8 Sept., 1916; Cp. Deville, pp. 221. foll.; Du Fournet, p. 171.
[6] P. E. Drakoulis, in *The Times*, 30 Nov., 1920.

At the same time, there was little he would not do to remove those fears and suspicions which were perpetually pleaded as reasons for coercion. The surrender of the Fleet had allayed once for all the Allies' uneasiness about their forces at sea. There remained their uneasiness about their forces on land. In spite of his repeated declarations that under no circumstances would Greece take up a hostile attitude, the King was credited with a treacherous design—to mass in Thessaly 80,000 men, lay up munitions and provisions, wait until the Allied Army should march on Monastir, and then attack it from behind.[1] After reading M. Venizelos's own avowal of his intention to follow up the conversion of Macedonia with an attack on the rest of Greece, particularly Thessaly,[2] one hardly needs to be told at whom King Constantine's precautions were aimed.

Yet, wishing to prove his good faith in a practical manner, the King called the British Minister and offered to reduce his army to less than half by disbanding about 35,000 men and to withdraw certain units from Thessaly. The British Minister, delighted by this spontaneous offer, thanked the King, expressing the hope that his action would be greatly appreciated, that all mistrust would vanish, and that the Powers would moderate their coercions. With a remark from the King, that the one thing he would not tolerate was a descent of rebels on Thessaly and the rest of Old Greece, and that he would attack them if they appeared, Sir Francis Elliot fully concurred.

Instead of the return which the King expected to this spontaneous proof of his sincerity, he received (20 October) an intimation that the Powers not only demanded what he had already granted, but in addition things which he could not possibly grant—the internment of the small remnant of his army in the Peloponnesus and a surrender of arms and war material equivalent to a complete disarmament. These measures, while exceeding all requirements for the security of the Allies, put the security of Greece in danger by leaving her a prey to revolutionary agitation. The King, therefore, begged the Powers not

[1] Du Fournet, p. 149.
[2] The *New Europe*, 29 March, 1917.

to insist on concessions which neither could he make nor would his people let him make.[1]

Nothing, indeed, was better calculated to excite to the highest degree the passions fermenting against the Allies than an insistence on total disarmament at a moment when M. Venizelos at Salonica and his partisans at Athens were arming. Fortunately a mediator appeared in the person of M. Benazet, a French Deputy and Reporter of the War Budget, who was passing through Athens on his way to Salonica to inspect the sanitary condition of the Army. His connexions had brought him into touch with the most influential leaders of both Greek parties; and with the sanction of M. Briand, procured through M. Guillemin, who, himself no longer received at Court, saw an advantage in reaching it by proxy, he undertook to negotiate an amicable arrangement between King Constantine and the Entente.

M. Benazet's idea was to obtain from the King not only tangible pledges which would eliminate all possibility of danger from the Allies' path, but also positive reinforcements for them in arms and men; and as a price he was prepared to guarantee to Old Greece her neutrality, her liberty in the management of her internal affairs, and her immunity from aggression on the part of M. Venizelos. Young, eloquent, and refined, the spokesman brought into an environment corrupted by diplomatic chicanery a breath of candour. His manner inspired and evoked confidence. The King readily agreed, besides the reduction which he had already offered, to transfer the remainder of his army to the Peloponnesus, to hand over to the Allies a considerable stock of guns, rifles, and other war material, and to allow all men who were released from their military obligations, and all officers who first resigned their commissions, to volunteer for service in Macedonia. M. Benazet, on his part, made himself guarantor for the French Government as to the pledges which the King required in exchange.[2]

This agreement met, at least in appearance, with the approval of M. Briand, who sent a telegram of congratula-

[1] Zalocostas to Greek Legations, Paris, London, Rome, Petrograd, 7/20 Oct., 1916. Cp. Du Fournet, pp. 149–50.

[2] Du Fournet, pp. 152–4, and Appendix 5.

tions to M. Benazet,[1] and with that of M. Guillemin, who was at last received by the King. Both the French Premier and his representative at Athens expressed themselves enchanted with the new turn of affairs, and even the fire-breathing Head of the French Secret Service declared that the result of the negotiation surpassed all hopes. As to Admiral Dartige, he could not but rejoice at an arrangement so consonant with his own ideas.[2] Thus all outstanding differences seemed happily settled, and the removal of mutual misunderstandings was celebrated by inspired pens in Paris and London.[3]

The only discordant note was struck by the Venizelist Press, which made no attempt to conceal its disappointment. And suddenly, just as the withdrawal of the royal troops from the north was about to begin, the troops of the Provisional Government attacked Katerini on the southern frontier of Macedonia. M. Venizelos had dropped the pose that his movement was directed solely against the Bulgars: he marched on Old Greece. Did he by this move try to force the hand of the Allies, as formerly by bringing them to Salonica he had tried to force the hand of the King? And was he encouraged in this move by those who were secretly opposed to an accommodation with the King? Admiral Dartige did not know. What he did know was that this *coup de force* was designed to compromise the arrangement with Athens; and as he could neither play nor appear to play a double game, he immediately telegraphed to Salonica demanding the retreat of the Venizelists. At the same time the King informed the French and British Ministers that he could not withdraw his troops from Thessaly until all danger was removed, and asked them to do everything that depended on them to remedy this state of things. Whereupon General Roques, the French Minister of War then at Salonica, disavowed the Venizelist action, and to prevent similar exploits in future decided to create a neutral zone under French occupation and administration. The Athens Government was not pleased to see part of its territory passing into French hands; but, after some demur, bowed to the decision.[4]

[1] Du Fournet, p. 316.
[2] Du Fournet, pp. 155–6.
[3] *The Times*, 28 Oct., 1 Nov., 1916.
[4] Zalocostas to Greek Legations, Paris and London, 12 Oct./

Not so the Salonica Government. M. Venizelos keenly resented this barrier to his impetuosity. The neutral zone, he complained, by blocking off his access to Thessaly, forbade all extension of his movement and prevented him from " carrying with him three-fifths of Greece and levying important contingents such as would have made him the absolute master of the country."[1] But the Allies were no longer to be deluded. They had discovered that " the mass of the people of continental Greece was hostile to the Chief of the Liberals." An extension of his movement could only be effected by overwhelming force, and as M. Venizelos had neither the men nor the arms required for the enterprise, the Allies would have to provide both. In other words, civil war in the rear of their armies would not only jeopardise their security but entangle them in a campaign for the conquest of Greece: a thing which they could not afford to do even to oblige M. Venizelos. They preferred a subtler and safer, if slower, way to the success of their common cause.

Baulked in his design on continental Greece, M. Venizelos demanded from Admiral Dartige the light flotilla in order to promote his cause in the islands. But here, also, he met with a check. The Admiral had a different use for those vessels in view. Many months back he felt the want of patrol and torpedo-boats to cope with the growing submarine peril, and had suggested asking Greece for the cession of her light flotilla. The matter was postponed in the expectation that the vessels would go over to the Allies spontaneously as a result of the Venizelist movement, and on this expectation being disappointed they were, as we have seen, sequestered under the pretence of security for the Allied armada. Another excuse was needed for their appropriation; and it came in the nick of time: two Greek steamers at that moment struck mines, presumably sown by an enemy submarine, in the Gulf of Athens. With the promptitude that comes of practice, Admiral Dartige announced to the Hellenic Government his decision to employ, at a valuation, its light flotilla in the submarine

3 Nov.; General Roques to Greek Premier, Athens, 2/15 Nov.; Zalocostas to Greek Legation, Paris, 4/17 Nov., 1916. Cp. Du Fournet, pp. 169–70, 182.

[1] *The New Europe*, 29 March, 1917.

warfare, and to use the Salamis arsenal for repairs (3 November.)[1]

M. Lambros replied that compliance with the Admiral's request involved a breach of International Law, which forbade the sale of naval units by a neutral State to a belligerent, as well as a breach of a Greek law which forbade the alienation of ships possessing military value. Besides, public opinion would never endure to see the country stripped of its naval means of defence and exposed to possible aggression. He was, therefore, regretfully obliged to refuse the Hellenic Government's consent.[2]

The Admiral could not let a refusal stand in his way: "It would be unpardonable," he wrote in answer, "to leave these vessels unutilized whilst German submarines, heedless of the neutrality of Greece, came and sank her merchant ships in her waters, thus stopping maritime traffic and seriously prejudicing the life of the country."[3]

Having got over these little formalities, he hoisted the French flag on the vessels and seized the arsenal (7 November). The Hellenic Government's protest against this fresh outrage,[4] naturally, had no effect. Only the British Minister made it clear that the act was exclusively the work of France.[5]

Nothing done by one group of belligerents, needless to say, escaped the attention of the other; and the representatives of the enemy Powers, besides fulminating against a step which, "in flagrant contravention of the principles of neutrality came to augment the armed forces of their adversaries," improved the occasion by reciting all the proofs of "a benevolent neutrality without parallel," which Greece had been giving those adversaries since the beginning of the War: the free passage of munitions and provisions for Servia; the facilities accorded to Entente shipping; the toleration of recruiting bureaux and wireless stations in Greek territory; the use of isles and ports as naval bases. Then the landing of the Allies in Macedonia

[1] Du Fournet, pp. 135–6, 165, 164, 183.
[2] Lambros to Dartige du Fournet, Athens, 23 Oct./5 Nov., 1916.
[3] Dartige du Fournet to Lambros, on board the *Provence*, 7 Nov., 1916.
[4] Zalocostas to the Entente Legations, Athens, 25 Oct./7 Nov., 1916.
[5] Du Fournet, p. 168.

had inaugurated a period of continuous violations of neutrality and the establishment of a regime of terror towards them: their Consuls were arrested, members of their Legations were assaulted, great numbers of their nationals were led into captivity or driven into exile, their merchant ships were seized, and the Ministers themselves were deprived of all means of communicating with their Governments. Last of all came the installation of Allied troops in Athens itself and the sequestration of the Greek navy, now transformed into a definite cession; and, according to trustworthy intelligence, the Entente Powers meant to exact shortly the disarmament of the Greek army also. They ended with a hint that the indulgence of their Governments might reach its limit.[1]

A more painful position for a free people and its rulers could not be imagined. But King Constantine comforted himself with the thought that the "pledges of friendship" exacted from him by the Allies would be followed by corresponding pledges from them. His negotiation with M. Benazet had received its finishing touches in the evening of 7 November: the Entente Powers would present to the Greek Government a Note setting forth their demands in the form of a "Summons," the terms of which were, word for word, agreed upon between the two parties. By this document the Allies bound themselves "to repeal the coercive measures taken up to now and never to tolerate that armed Greek bodies which had declared to have as their sole aim a struggle for the vindication of national ideas should turn aside from that aim in order to engage in acts of sedition."[2]

This clause formed the corner-stone of the whole pact. "It is clear," telegraphs M. Benazet to Paris, "that some sort of compensation is admitted in principle,"—for very good reasons: "The King's sole fear—and a very intelligible one—is lest his own arms should be handed over to Greeks who would use them to march on Athens and overthrow his dynasty." Moreover, without such guarantees it will be impossible for the King and his Premier "to make disarmament acceptable by the Royalist Party,

[1] Mirbach, Szilassy, Passaroff, Ghalib Kemaly, Athens, 26 Oct./8 Nov., 1916.

[2] Du Fournet, p. 177.

which constitutes the great majority of the nation." He added that neither the King nor his Premier was unaware of the hostility with which these efforts for conciliation were viewed by certain personalities: but both were resolved to show the greatest patience until the agreement had produced all its effects. The negotiator himself, equally aware of the hostile forces at work, left Athens with a heart full of misgivings.[1]

[1] Du Fournet, pp. 174–8.

CHAPTER XIV

A WEEK had hardly elapsed since the conclusion of the agreement between the King of Greece and the French Deputy, when (16 November) Admiral Dartige du Fournet addressed to the Hellenic Premier a letter, claiming 18 batteries of field and 16 of mountain artillery with 1,000 shells for each gun; 40,000 rifles with 220 cartridges for each rifle; 140 machine-guns with ammunition; and 50 motor-vans. The claim was presented as "compensation" for the war material abandoned to the Germano-Bulgars in Cavalla: about guarantees not a word.[1]

The King called the Admiral (19 November) and, with perfect courtesy, yet with a visible change in his attitude, expressed his astonishment at so unexpected a version of the "Summons" agreed upon. The Admiral had no explanation to give to the King. But to us he explains everything. The French Minister at Athens was hostile to M. Benazet's amicable arrangement, and repudiated his pledges, notably the one concerning the spread of sedition. "We are not made to defend kings against their peoples," he said. The French Government likewise completely ignored the agreement, and the French Minister of War had dictated the lines on which the claim was drafted. Admiral Dartige's comments on this volte-face are interesting: "Without wanting to give the Greek Government the two guarantees which it demanded, they claimed from it the fulfilment of the engagements of which those guarantees were the counter-part. It was a truly draconian and unexpected pretension," he says, and to base that pretension on the Cavalla affair was "to misconstrue in part the reality of facts."[2]

Why, then, was M. Benazet encouraged to negotiate? Probably there were in France moderate elements strong enough to make it necessary to throw a sop to them. But the extremists were the stronger party; and when it came

[1] Du Fournet, pp. 188–9.

[2] Du Fournet, pp. 151, 179–80, 182–3, 190–1.

to a decision they carried the day. However, be the motive of the mission what it may, its repudiation meant that the old policy still held the field. It was an essential part of that policy not to allow Greece any attitude other than that of a belligerent. So, while the Entente Cabinets continued disclaiming all desire to drag an unwilling country into war and declaring that the only thing they asked for was the observance of a benevolent neutrality, the practical exponents of their policy on the spot continued to take steps in which Greece could acquiesce only if she contemplated a rupture with the Central Powers.

In the evening of the same day (19 November) Admiral Dartige, at the instance of the Entente Ministers, ordered their German, Austrian, Turkish, and Bulgarian colleagues to quit the country in three days.[1] The Hellenic Government, to whom the Admiral communicated his decree, protested against this blow at the representatives of Powers with whom Greece, in virtue of her neutrality recognized by the Entente, was on terms of friendship and peace; pointing out that the step was a breach not only of the inviolability assured to diplomats by International Law, but also of a formal promise given by the French and British Ministers to Premier Zaimis when the Allied Fleet arrived at the Piræus—viz. that the missions of the Powers at war with the Entente had absolutely nothing to fear. It asked that the decision might be revoked.[2]

Our representatives experienced no difficulty in disposing of this protest. The promise given was merely "an act of spontaneous courtesy"—it had not "any character of a definite, irrevocable engagement"— "and could not, in any case, have for effect to guarantee the Ministers of countries at war with the Entente against the consequences of hostile acts foreign to their diplomatic functions and contrary to the neutrality of Greece"—acts of espionage and intrigue which, as a matter of fact, form an integral part of a diplomat's functions. They did not, therefore, "deem it possible to ask Admiral Dartige du Fournet to revoke the decision taken by him in virtue of the powers with which he was invested."[3]

[1] Du Fournet, pp. 195–7.
[2] Zalocostas to the Entente Legations, Athens, 7/20 Nov, 1916.
[3] Guillemin, Elliot, Bosdani, Demidoff, Athens, 8/21 Nov., 1916.

Thus the Ministers of Germany, Austria, Turkey, and Bulgaria were bundled off (22 November), protesting vigorously "against the outrages committed on four diplomatic representatives in neutral territory," characterising the things which took place at Athens as "beyond all comment," and wondering "whether a firmer attitude would not have spared the country these affronts on its sovereignty."[1]

This unprecedented measure added still further to the irritation of the Greeks, and the manner in which it was executed—without even a show of the courtesies prescribed between diplomats by the tradition of centuries—shocked the very man who acted as the executioner. Not for the first time had Admiral Dartige been made to serve ends which he did not understand, by means which he did not approve, in association with persons whom he could not respect. But the worst was yet to come.

The Greek Premier delivered his answer to the Admiral's claim on 22 November. In that answer M. Lambros showed that the Allies had already "compensated themselves" amply: the war material which they had appropriated—not to mention the light flotilla—being superior both in quantity and in quality to anything that had been abandoned to their enemies. Then he went on to state that the surrender of any more material would be equivalent to a departure from neutrality; and the Central Powers, which had already protested against the light flotilla's passing into the hands of the Entente, would so regard it. Lastly, public opinion would never tolerate that Greece should so denude herself of arms as to be unable to defend herself in case of need. For all these reasons, the Hellenic Government categorically refused the Admiral's claim.[2]

The Admiral felt keenly the iniquity of compelling a neutral country to give up, without conditions, the arms which constituted its safeguard at once against invasion and against insurrection. But what could he do? He had his orders, and it was his duty to carry them out as soon as possible.[3] So, making use of the plenary authority

[1] Mirbach, Szilassy, Passaroff, Ghalib Kemaly, Athens, 8/21 Nov., 1916.

[2] Lambros to Dartige du Fournet, Athens, 9/22 Nov., 1916. Cp. Du Fournet, pp. 192–4.

[3] Du Fournet, p. 187.

thrust upon him, he retorted (24 Nov.) with an Ultimatum: ten mountain batteries should be handed over to him by 1 December at the latest, and the remainder by 15 December. Failing obedience to his command, suitable steps would be taken on 1 December to enforce it. He declined to believe that "the public opinion of a country so enlightened as Greece could regard as intolerable the idea of handing over to Powers towards whom it professed a benevolent neutrality a stock of arms and munitions destined for the liberation of territory saturated with the noblest Greek blood: their place was, not at the bottom of magazines, but at the front."[1]

There is always a limit beyond which human intelligence cannot be insulted with success, or human patience tried with impunity. France had long since overstepped that limit. Across all the self-contradictory subtleties of her statesmen, the Greeks, thanks to the self-revealing acts of her soldiers, sailors, and agents, had discerned the real object of her diplomacy: to force upon them M. Venizelos and to rule them through him: she had already helped M. Venizelos to establish his sway over New Greece, and was now attempting to extend it over Old Greece. The creation of a "neutral zone" did not blind them: they had only too much reason to know what neutrality meant in the vocabulary of the Allies: they had taken the King's ships: all that remained was to take his arms and to hand them over to their protégé. Such was the true significance of the fresh "pledges of friendship" claimed from them; and the claim aroused unanimous indignation: we will not submit to any further robbery, they cried. What have we gained by submission so far? Our conciliatory attitude towards the Allies and our efforts for a friendly settlement of the questions daily raised by them are regarded as signs of fear and rewarded accordingly: their arrogance increases with our compliance. No more compliance. The indignation was, naturally, most pronounced in military circles, and the officers of the Athens garrison took a vow to lay down their lives in defence of the King's and country's honour.

Before pushing matters to extremes, Admiral Dartige called on the King (27 Nov.) and tried to intimidate him

[1] Du Fournet, pp. 197–9.

by telling him that the Allied armada had Greece at its mercy, and that by simply cutting off the supplies of corn and coal it could break all resistance. The King agreed that the Allies possessed all-powerful means of persuasion, but did not seem as much impressed as was expected. He reminded the Admiral that he had done everything possible to prove his goodwill by spontaneously reducing his active army. He could do no more: the people and the army were so excited over this last demand that to make them accept it was beyond his power. The measure might be accepted, if the quantity claimed was lessened: he would take steps in that sense with the French Government through his brother, Prince George. It was clear that the King's change of tone arose from the absence of the guarantees which he had asked and hoped for: not having received those guarantees he considered himself released from the promises he had given. The Admiral understood the position perfectly, and in his heart did not blame the King for rejecting the "draconian pretension" that he should disarm while not secure that his arms would not be used against himself. But he had his orders and could only say that he meant to carry them out: on Friday morning, 1 December, he would impose the will of the Entente Governments. He still thought that the King would not resist "energetic pressure."[1]

Proportionate to their loyalty was the Athenians' animosity against the Venizelists in their midst, who had long been plotting and arming in conjunction with the French, and preparing for one of those *coups* for which Paris had set the fashion during a hundred years. Admiral Dartige had expressed his concern for these unhappy patriots to the King at his last interview, and on going from the Palace to the French Legation he found there the British Minister greatly alarmed because several important Venizelists had prayed him to obtain for them the Admiral's protection; but no sooner had the Admiral acted on their prayer, than the panic-stricken patriots implored him not to protect them, lest the measures taken for their safety should cause their destruction.[2] However, next day, the King assured the Admiral through his Marshal of the Court, that neither the persons nor the

[1] Du Fournet, pp. 201–4. [2] Du Fournet, pp. 202–3.

property of the Venizelists should suffer, on condition that neither the Entente Powers' detectives nor the detachments he was going to land indulged in arrests, deportations, or disappearances of Greek subjects, and that the Venizelists themselves abstained from acts calculated to provoke reprisals.[1]

Such was the state of things created by the Admiral's Ultimatum. What would happen when the time-limit expired? The inhabitants of Athens debated this question anxiously, and their anxiety was deepened by the sight of many disquieting symptoms: day after day Allied aeroplanes and automobiles carried out reconnaissances over the capital, paying special attention to the Royal Palace, intensifying the irritation of civilians and soldiers, and stiffening their resolution to resist, come what might.

The Hellenic Government endeavoured to ward off the storm by remonstrating with the Governments of the Entente direct. As the Admiral's claim was presented exclusively in the name of France, it began with Paris. The answer was that King Constantine had promised to the French Government the war material demanded, and the French Government had promised in exchange to relax the coercive measures: since the Greek Government declared that it could not fulfil this promise, it must suffer the consequences. Paris, in Admiral Dartige's words, "wanted to reap the fruit of the Benazet negotiation without paying the price agreed to."[2] Whatever London may have thought of this manœuvre, it said that the British Government was in full knowledge of the French Admiral's steps and supported them. Petrograd was equally cognizant of the affair, and, as it was a question of military measures with which Russia could not interfere, advised Greece to comply, assuring her that "what was done was for her good."[3]

As a last resource, Greece appealed to neutral countries, describing the condition in which she had long found herself, because she was not strong enough to impose respect for her neutrality, and protesting against this latest demand as most injurious to her honour and sub-

[1] Du Fournet, pp. 208–9. [2] Du Fournet, p. 205.
[3] Romanos, Paris, 15/28, 16/29 Nov.; Gennadius, London, 16/29 Nov.; Panas, Petrograd, 17/30 Nov., 1916.

versive of all her rights.[1] The solicitation remained fruitless. The great American Republic was too intimately connected with France and England to intervene on behalf of Greece. The small states knew too well from their own experience how frail are the foundations upon which rest the honour and the rights of weak neutrals in a world war.

Nevertheless, firm in the knowledge that he had the vast majority of the nation behind him, M. Lambros, on 30 November, by a final letter, declared to the French Admiral that his claim was utterly unacceptable. "I do not wish to believe," he concluded, "that, after examining in a spirit of goodwill and equity the reasons which render it impossible for the Greek people and its Government to give you satisfaction, you will proceed to measures which would be incompatible with the traditional friendship between France and Greece, and which the people would justly regard as hostile acts."[2]

In face of Greece's unequivocal determination not to yield, the Admiral would have been well advised to insist with his Government on an amicable accommodation. He had not the means of carrying out his threats. It is true, his ships dominated the sea and their guns the capital; but, since the Greeks were determined to stand another blockade and to risk the bombardment of their capital rather than surrender their arms, how could he take them without an army? The problem had not escaped the worthy sailor. So grave a claim, he tells us, could not be enforced without war; and the Entente Powers were not thinking of going to war with Greece. Therefore, he had hit on the expedient of giving to his action the name and, so far as the nature of the thing permitted, the character of a "pacific demonstration." Not one shot would be fired except in self-defence: the troops would not seek to seize the material by violence: they would simply occupy certain points of vantage until they received satisfaction. He admits that his confidence in the success of these tactics, since his last interview with the King, had suffered some diminution. But he still

[1] Zalocostas to Ministers of the United States, etc., Athens, 14/27 Nov.

[2] Lambros to Dartige du Fournet, Athens, 17/30 Nov., 1916.

nourished a hope—based on the fact "that the Athens Government had always hitherto ended by bowing to our will."[1] He overlooked the inflamed minds of the people.

Before break of day, on 1 December, a body of marines some 3,000 weak landed at the Piræus with machine-guns and marched on Athens in three columns, driving back the Greek patrols, which retired at their approach, and occupied some of the strategic positions aimed at without encountering any resistance. So far the pacific demonstration lived up to its name. Both sides conformed to their respective orders, which were to avoid all provocation, and on no account to fire first. But for all that the situation teemed with the elements of an explosion. Admiral Dartige, on landing, had noted the faces of the people: sullen and defiant, they faithfully reflected the anger which seethed in their hearts. And, about 11 o'clock, at one point the smouldering embers burst into flame. How, it is not known: as usually happens in such cases, each side accused the other of beginning. Once begun, the fight spread along the whole line to the French headquarters in the Zappeion.

At the sound of shots, King Constantine caused a telephone message to be sent through the French Legation to the French flagship, asking for Admiral Dartige, to beg him to stop the bloodshed. The officer at the other end of the wire hesitated to disclose the Admiral's whereabouts, fearing a trap; but at last he replied that his Chief had gone to the Zappeion, where indeed he was found shut up. A parley between that building and the Palace led to an armistice, during which negotiations for a peace were initiated by the Entente Ministers. In the middle of these, fighting broke out afresh; according to the Royalists, through the action of the Venizelists who, desirous to profit by the foreign invasion in order to promote a domestic revolution, opened rifle fire from the windows, balconies, and roofs of certain houses upon the royal troops patrolling the streets: a statement more than probable, seeing that arms had long been stored in Venizelist houses with a view to such an enterprise. At the same time, Admiral Dartige, who seems to have completely lost his head,

[1] Du Fournet, p. 204.

considering the armistice at an end, ordered the warships to start a bombardment.

While shells fell upon the outlying quarters of the town, and even into the courtyard of the Royal Palace itself, forcing the Queen to put her children in the cellar, the Entente Ministers arrived to conclude the treaty:

"Are these your arguments, gentlemen?" asked the King, as he received them. Amid the general consternation, he alone maintained his calmness.

The conference went on to the accompaniment of whistling and bursting shells, and at 7 o'clock ended in an agreement, whereby Admiral Dartige consented to stop hostilities and accept the King's offer of six mountain batteries, in lieu of the ten he had demanded; the Entente Ministers undertaking to recommend to their Governments the abandonment of his other demands.

There ensued an exchange of prisoners, and the retreat of the Allies to their ships during the night, followed next day by the detachment quartered at the Zappeion, and all the controllers of police, posts, telegraphs, telephones, and railways. Many of the ruffians in the pay of the Franco-British Secret Services anticipated this evacuation by slipping out of the capital which they had terrorized for nearly a year.

And so the pacific demonstration was over, having cost the Greeks 4 officers and 26 men killed, and 4 officers and 51 men wounded. The Allied casualties were 60 killed, including 6 officers, and 167 wounded.

For the rest, no epithet was less applicable to the affair than that of "Athenian Vespers," with which the Parisian press christened it. Admiral Dartige protests indignantly against the grotesque exaggerations of his imaginative compatriots. Apart from the tragic features natural to a pacific demonstration, he declares that the whole drama passed off as pleasantly as a drama could. Not a single Allied subject was ill-treated. Not one shot was fired on the Legations of the Entente Powers, whose Ministers and nationals, in the midst of it all, incurred only such danger as came from their own shells—shells showered upon an open town. Even the French bluejackets, who had long been a thorn in the very heart of Athens, were conducted back to their proper place under a Greek escort, ingloriously

but safely. A like spirit, to a still higher degree, marked the treatment in Greek hospitals of the Allies' wounded, whose rapid recovery, says the Admiral, testified to the care which they received. "We assisted in a civil war: the Royalists struck in our marines the protectors of their political enemies."[1]

It was upon those enemies that Royalist wrath satiated itself. On 2 December, veritable battles took place in many parts of Athens; suspect houses, hotels, offices, and shops being assailed and defended with murderous fury. The house of M. Venizelos, as was fitting, formed the centre of the conflict. Twenty Cretan stalwarts had barricaded themselves in it and held out until machine-guns persuaded them to surrender. Within was discovered a small arsenal of rifles, revolvers, hand-grenades, dynamite cartridges, fuses: among them a bundle of weapons still wrapped in the French canvas in which it had arrived. Tell-tale articles of a similar nature were discovered on the premises of other conspirators, who were led off to prison, pursued by crowds hooting, cursing, spitting at them, so that their escorts had the greatest difficulty in saving them from being lynched. Although not comparable to parallel scenes witnessed by many a Western city under analogous circumstances, the event was an exhibition of human savagery sufficiently ugly in itself: it did not require the legends of massacre and torture with which it was embellished by pious journalists anxious to excite in the Allied publics sympathy for persons whom the Allies' own advance had instigated to violence and their precipitate retreat had exposed to a not unmerited vengeance.[2]

[1] Du Fournet, pp. 210–51; Paxton Hibben, pp. 440–80; *Resumé du Rapport Official sur les Evenements du 18 novembre/1 decembre*, 1916.

[2] According to the Hellenic Government, the losses of the Royalists in this civil strife amounted to 13 soldiers killed and 24 wounded, 6 civilians killed and 6 wounded, besides 5 killed (including 3 women) and 6 wounded (including 4 women) by the insurgents accidentally; the Venizelist losses were limited to 3 killed and 2 wounded.—Zalocostas to Greek Legations abroad, Athens, 27 Nov./10 Dec., 1916.

CHAPTER XV

BY 3 December calm had descended on Athens. But echoes of the storm continued reverberating in Paris and London. In Paris it was asserted, and in London repeated, that the French Admiral had fallen into a cunningly laid trap: King Constantine had promised to hand over his war material; but when the Allies landed to receive it, he caused them to be treacherously attacked and murdered.[1] On the strength of this assertion, the Entente newspapers demanded punishment swift and drastic: a prince who broke faith deserved no pity. His offer of six batteries was "an atonement" both cynical and inadequate for the "ambush" by which French and English blood had been spilt. Similarly the internecine strife of 2 December and the subsequent proceedings against the Venizelists were depicted as a wanton hunt of harmless and law-abiding citizens. Day by day the stream of calumny, assiduously fed from the fountain-head at Salonica, grew in volume and virulence; and King Constantine was branded with every opprobrious epithet of liar, traitor, and assassin.

These were weapons against which the King of Greece and his Government had nothing to oppose. They tried to explain the true nature of the abortive Benazet negotiation, showing that, if there was any breach of faith, it was not on their part; they denounced the falsehoods and the exaggerations relating to the suppression of the seditious outbreak; they asked that a mixed Commission should be appointed to conduct an impartial inquiry on the spot while the events were still fresh and evidence abundant. The French and British Press Censors took care that not a whisper of their defence should reach the French and British publics.[2] Frenchmen and Englishmen

[1] See *Le Temps* and *The Times*, 4 Dec., 1916.

[2] Zalocostas to Greek Legations, Paris, London, Petrograd, Rome, 24 Nov./7 Dec.; 25 Nov./8 Dec.; 26 Nov./9 Dec.

might hear of M. Venizelos's deeds through his friends. They were allowed to hear of the King's only through his enemies. It was clear that the policy which had prompted the disastrous enterprise of 1 December had not yet worked itself out to its full issue.

Admiral Dartige could not very well endorse the breach of faith legend. He knew that the engagement about the delivery of arms was reciprocal, and that, as France had failed to ratify it on her part, King Constantine rightly considered himself free from all obligations on his part. He also knew that, far from being lured into landing by false assurances of surrender, he had been emphatically warned against it by categorical refusals and intimations of resistance. Yet, human nature being what it is, the honest sailor, maddened by his discomfiture, called the inevitable collision a "*guet-apens*" and, even whilst negotiating for release, he meditated revenge.

To him the peace arranged through the instrumentality of the Entente Ministers was but a "*sorte d'armistice.*" He had agreed to it only in order to extricate himself from his present difficulties and to gain time for resuming hostilities under more favourable conditions. He and his men, he tells us with an engaging candour, were at the mercy of the Greeks: had he not accepted the King's offer—outnumbered, surrounded, and without food or water for more than twenty-four hours—they would have been ignominiously arrested. Besides, the configuration of the ground sheltered the Greek troops from the naval fire, while the Legations both of the Entente and of neutral Powers lay exposed to it. Lastly, a continued bombardment might have driven the Greeks to exasperation and perhaps to a massacre of Entente Ministers and subjects. It was imperative to give the Allies and neutrals time for flight and himself for serious war preparations. The delivery of the whole stock of arms had been fixed by his Ultimatum for 15 December. In that fortnight he proposed to obtain from his Government the forces necessary

28 Nov./11 Dec.; Metaxas, Paris, 24 Nov./7 Dec; 2/15 Dec. Delyannis, London, 3/16 Dec., 1916. The documents containing the King's promises to M. Benazet were not published until 1918 (see *The Times*, April 22, 1918); while those containing M. Benazet's promises to the King became known only through the publication of Admiral Dartige du Fournet's book in 1920.

for a battle, and permission to bombard Athens in earnest —with or without notice to its inhabitants, but, of course, always with due regard for its *monuments historiques*.

Such was his plan. General Sarrail embraced it with ardour; the Paris Government sanctioned it; troops began to arrive and French and British residents to flee (3–5 Dec.). But very soon difficulties became manifest. The transports had brought men and mules, but no provisions for either. Greek volunteers and regulars mustered in defence of their capital. The British Admiral declined to take part in any war operations. The French Minister dreaded open hostilities. In the circumstances, Admiral Dartige found it expedient to "give proof of his spirit of self-denial," by renouncing his heroic dream of vengeance "*immédiate, retentissante*," and by advising Paris not to set up a new front at Athens: after all, the matter was not really worth a war. He now proposed, instead, a pacific blockade; and, Paris assenting, he proclaimed the blockade as from 8 December.[1]

With this act Admiral Dartige du Fournet's career came to a sudden end. A few days later the French Government deprived him of his command and placed him on the retired list. After a decent interval, the British Government decorated him with the Grand Cross of the Bath.[2] Whether his conduct entitled him to a decoration, his character should certainly have saved him from disgrace; for of all the men engaged in these transactions, he seems to have been the most respectable. No impartial reader of his book can fail to see that he blundered because he moved in the dark: it was never explained to him what political designs lay beneath the pretended military necessities; and the constant incongruity between the avowed aims of his employers and the steps dictated by his instructions tended to bewilder a mind devoid of all aptitude or appetite for diplomacy.

Admiral Dartige gone, the blockade was carried on by his successor, Admiral Gauchet. The Greeks took it as an accustomed evil. "This measure," wrote one of their

[1] Du Fournet, pp. 226–9, 234, 256–7, 260–2, 266, 269–72.

[2] Du Fournet, pp. 272–4, 284–5. He complains bitterly of the injustice of his treatment: he was condemned unheard—like King Constantine; and for a similar reason: "*un débat large et public aurait établi toutes les responsabilités.*"

leading journals, "cannot terrify a population which has faced with serenity and fortitude much greater dangers. The Hellenic people did not hesitate, when the need arose, to come into collision with four Great Powers in defence of its independence and honour. It did so without hate, without perturbation, but calmly, as one performs an imposed and unavoidable duty. It deliberately chose to risk annihilation rather than see its fatherland disarmed and enslaved. It preferred a hopeless struggle to degradation. To-day it is threatened with the spectre of famine. It will face that spectre with serenity and fortitude. The menace is aimed at its stomach: very well, the people will tighten its belt."[1]

At the same time, Paris, London, and Petrograd were vigorously discussing the demands which were to be enforced by the blockade; but, owing to the wide divergences of opinion existing between the various Cabinets, decisions could only be reached by degrees and dealt out by doses. Not until 14 December did the Entente Governments deliver themselves of the first-fruit of their travail: Greece was to keep the arms of which she could not be despoiled, but she should remove them, as well as her army, from the northern regions bordering on Macedonia. The Hellenic Government was given twenty-four hours in which to comply; refusal would constitute an act of hostility, and the Allied Ministers would forthwith leave Athens.[2]

To show that they were in earnest, the French and British Ministers embarked on two ships moored at the Piræus, where they awaited the Hellenic Government's reply; and, before the time-limit expired, the French Admiral, by a notice put up at the Piræus town-hall, warned the inhabitants to close their shops and retire to their homes by 4 p.m. in view of an impending bombardment of Athens.

The Hellenic Government acceded to the contents of the Ultimatum, and immediately gave orders for the removal of troops and war material.[3] This prompt compliance was received by the people of Greece with

[1] *The Nea Himera*, 25 Nov./8 Dec., 1916.
[2] Guillemin, Elliot, Bosdari, Demidoff, Athens, 1/14 Dec., 1916.
[3] Zalocostas to the Legations of France, England, Italy, and Russia. Athens, 2/15 Dec., 1916.

loud disapproval. They criticized vehemently their rulers' readiness to yield as pusillanimous and injudicious. The Government, they said, instead of profiting by the events of 1 December to clear up the situation, drifts back into the path of concessions which led to those fatal events: it encourages the Entente Powers to put forward increasingly exorbitant pretensions, and, forgetting that it is for us to complain and claim better treatment, it creates the impression that they are in the right and we in the wrong. For some time past such had been the tone even of moderate critics; and upon this fresh submission there was a general outcry of alarm. It is true, the Allies in their Note averred that they demanded the removal of troops and guns simply and solely "in order to secure their forces against an attack." But the Greeks were less inclined than ever to treat the alleged danger to the Allied army in Macedonia as anything more than a pretext: the true object, they maintained, was to secure M. Venizelos's return and the expulsion of King Constantine.

The conduct of the Entente representatives hitherto had given only too much ground for such bitter suspicions, and the search of Venizelist houses had recently produced concrete evidence, in the form of a letter from the Leader to one of his adherents stating, among other things, that a definite agreement concluded between him and the representatives of the Entente Powers assured his speedy domination of Athens through the whole strength of the Entente. The publication of this document, with a photographic facsimile,[1] had confirmed the apprehensions which had long haunted the popular mind. Nor did M. Venizelos's indignant denial of its authenticity, or the Entente Ministers' emphatic protestation that never, since the Cretan's departure from Athens, had they done anything to facilitate his return, shake the conviction that the big *coup* was planned for 1 December.

If any doubts as to the Allies' ulterior aims still lingered, they were dispelled by their Press, the most serious organs of which, on the eve of Admiral Dartige's landing, pointedly referred to the great error committed by the Powers in allowing King Constantine to dismiss M. Venizelos in September, 1915, and urged that the time had come to

[1] *The Nea Himera*, 21 Nov./4 Dec., 1916.

remedy that error, informing their readers that England, France and Russia were not bound to guarantee the possession of the Greek throne to any individual sovereign, irrespective of his constitutional behaviour. The *coup* having failed, the same organs, in commenting on the Allies' present Ultimatum, still declared that the true remedy for Greece was to place her under the control of M. Venizelos; but, as such a course was not possible in the presence of a hostile King and an over-excited army, the first necessity was to eliminate the Greek army.[1]

However, the Greeks submitted to it all with sullen resignation: they had learned that the wisest thing for the weak is to control themselves.

The next step remained with the Entente Governments, who were exhorted by their Press organs not to be deluded by King Constantine's concessions. For it was one of the ironies of the situation that, while his own subjects blamed the King for his conciliatory attitude, that attitude was denounced by his enemies as a fresh instance of duplicity. They affirmed—with what amount of accuracy will appear in the sequel—that this great deceiver was making, in concert with the Kaiser, stealthy preparations for war against the Allies, and that meanwhile he intended by a semblance of submission to lull them into a false security. Extreme measures were, therefore, needed, not only to punish him for his past crimes, but also to prevent Greece from becoming a base of hostile operations in the near future.

Thus certain in advance of public support, the Allies, on 31 December, served upon the Hellenic Government a series of demands divided into guarantees and reparations. Under the first heading, Greece was required to transfer all her arms and munitions to the Peloponnesus, which, being practically an island, could be guarded by the Allied Fleet; to forbid all Reservist meetings north of the Peloponnesus; to enforce rigorously the law prohibiting civilians from carrying arms; to admit the re-establishment of the foreign controls over her police, telegraphs, telephones, and railways. Under the second, all persons detained on charges of high-treason, conspiracy, and sedition, should be immediately released, and those who

[1] See leading articles in *The Times*, 30 Nov., 16 Dec., 1916.

had suffered indemnified; the General commanding the Athens garrison on 1 December should be cashiered; formal apologies should be tendered to the Allied Ministers and their flags publicly saluted in the presence of the assembled garrison. On their part, the Powers gave Greece a formal undertaking that they would not allow the forces of the Salonica Government to take advantage of the withdrawal of the Royal troops from Thessaly in order to cross the neutral zone. They ended with the announcement that the blockade would be maintained until satisfaction had been accorded on all the above points, and that they reserved to themselves full liberty of further action should the attitude of the King's Government give them fresh cause for complaint.[1]

Before returning a definite answer to this Note, the Hellenic Government submitted a Memorandum by which it promised forthwith the reparations demanded, except the wholesale release without trial of political prisoners; and accepted in principle the demand for guarantees on condition that the Powers, on their part, should give an absolute and irrevocable guarantee against the extension of the revolutionary movement, not only across the neutral zone, but over any territories which had not been annexed by the Salonica Committee before 1 December, pointing out that this was an indispensable requisite to reassure the nation and induce it to acquiesce in total disarmament. In conclusion, the Hellenic Government expressed the hope that, as total disarmament would put Greece out of all possibility of hurting the Allies, they would renounce the liberty of further action which they had reserved to themselves, and that they would, in justice to the people, raise the blockade.[2]

In reply, the Allies launched another Ultimatum: insisting upon the definite acceptance of their demands. If such acceptance were not forthcoming within forty-eight hours, or if, after an undertaking was given, any obstacles were wilfully placed in its execution, they threatened to have recourse to their military and naval weapons. On the other hand, they promised to respect Greece's resolution

[1] Guillemin, Elliot, Demidoff, Piræus, 18/31 Dec., 1916.

[2] Zalocostas to Legations of France, England and Russia, Athens, 23 Dec./5 Jan., 1917.

to keep out of the War, and pledged themselves not to allow the adherents of the Salonica Government to take advantage of the withdrawal of the Greek troops into the Peloponnesus in order to invade by land or by sea any part whatever of Greek territory thus left defenceless, or to permit the installation of Venizelist authorities in any territories actually in the possession of the Royal Government which they might see fit to occupy hereafter for military reasons. Lastly, they signified their readiness to raise the blockade as soon as special delegates should judge that the evacuation of troops and material had been partly carried out, and that its completion was assured.[1]

These pledges, which had been the subject of acute discussion between the Allies at the Rome Conference, and were carried in face of strong opposition from France, marked another victory of moderation over consistency. That they lessened the alarm of the Greek people may be doubted; but the Greek people had by this time found that if it wanted, not only to live at peace, but to exist at all, it had to accept the situation on the Allies' own terms.

As to the rulers, they understood the popular feeling, sympathized with it, shared it. But their powerlessness prevented them from refusing terms which their pride compelled them to resent. They could not entertain seriously thoughts of active resistance, unless the Allies were attacked by the Germans; but how little prospect of this there was has been revealed by a number of messages exchanged at that period between Athens and Berlin. From these documents it appears that on 6 December the Queen, whose indignation at the long-sustained persecution had been brought to a head by the bombardment of her home and the narrow escape of her children, telegraphed to her brother, anxiously inquiring when the Germans would be ready for a decisive offensive in Macedonia. On 16 December the Kaiser replied to his sister, condoling with her on the ordeal she and her husband had gone through, congratulating them on the courage they had displayed, pointing out that the Entente had once more

[1] Guillemin, Bosdani, Demidoff, Erskine, Salamis Strait, 26 Dec./8 Jan., 1917.

shown clearly what its real aims were, and expressing the opinion that no other course was left to King Constantine but "to turn openly on his executioners: Tino's intervention with his main forces against Sarrail's left wing would be decisive," he said. The Queen answered, on 26 December, that the solution the Kaiser advised would be possible only if Sarrail, attacked by the Germans, were forced to retire into the parts of Greece occupied by the Royalists: as it was, the distance which separated his left wing from them was too great and their lines of communication would be too much exposed: besides, their provisions and munitions were not sufficient for a prolonged struggle. Under these conditions, she added, only a speedy attack by the Germans could afford Greece the opportunity of fighting for deliverance from a frightful situation. But Von Hindenburg did not see his way to promise an attack. Meanwhile, the pressure of the blockade increased. By 2 January, the Queen, as her indignation cooled, prepared to resign herself to the situation: "We have bread only for a few days more, other provisions are also running short," she telegraphed, "consequently war against the Entente is out of the question now. I consider the game lost." Her husband concurred.[1]

The King and his Ministers also knew that, unless they accepted the Allies' terms, worse would be forced upon them by starvation. Clearly, the first thing to be done was to have the blockade raised. So far the little ship had contended with the gale hardily—in fact, foolhardily—coming out of the contest with scarce a sail. Captain and crew at last decided to give up the unequal struggle: the gale appeared to have almost spent itself: conversations for peace were at that moment in progress between the belligerents: at the worst, things would go on much as they had been going on, until the end of the War put an end to the sorry drama. So, on 10 January, after an all-night sitting of the Crown Council, Greece made her

[1] In his one message (6 January) he dwelt on Greece's critical condition, asking if a German attack was intended, and when it would probably take place. Such is the gist of these famous telegrams. For the rest, they consist of allusions by the Queen to her sufferings and appropriate epithets applied to the authors of them. See *White Book*, Nos. 177 foll.

unconditional surrender: she would drain the cup of humiliation to its bitterest dregs.[1]

To all seeming, the pledges given by both sides formed a solid basis for a *modus vivendi*: the King gave guarantees thoroughly safeguarding the Allies against any danger, real or imaginary; and the Allies gave guarantees equally safeguarding the King against seditious intrigues. All that remained was that the Allies should exact from the King a fulfilment of his engagements, and fulfil their own. They did not fail in the first part of the programme. The transfer of troops and armaments to the Peloponnesus was scrupulously carried out under the supervision of an Allied Military Commission, which counted and examined every man, every gun, every rifle and cartridge both at the point of departure and at the point of arrival. The Reservists' leagues were dissolved, and the people, in so far as such a measure is possible, were compelled to give up the firearms, mostly obsolete, in their possession. The foreign Controls, so far as the Hellenic Government was concerned, might be re-established at the Allies' discretion. The Venizelist prisoners were set free, and a mixed Commission was in due course appointed to deal with the question of indemnities. The General commanding the Athens garrison was cashiered. Formal apologies were tendered to the Allies' Ministers, and their flags were saluted with all the solemnities prescribed by themselves. In brief, on the unanimous testimony of Entente diplomatists and publicists, Greece loyally fulfilled every one of her obligations, serious and frivolous.[2] Yet, despite her Government's reiterated prayers that the blockade should in accordance with the promise given, be raised, the blockade was not only continued, but, as the months dragged on, was intensified.

[1] Zalocostas to Legations of France, England, Italy and Russia, 28 Dec./10 Jan., 1917.

[2] See *The Times*, 20, 23, 24, 30 Jan., 1917.

CHAPTER XVI

AMONG the acts sanctioned by International Law, none is more worthy of a philosopher's or a philanthropist's attention than the "pacific blockade." The credit for the institution belongs to all the great civilised communities, but for its pleasant designation the world is indebted to the eminent jurist M. Hautefeuille—a countryman of the ingenious Dr. Guillotin. It denotes "a blockade exercised by a great Power for the purpose of bringing pressure to bear on a weaker State, without actual war. That it is an act of violence, and therefore in the nature of war, is undeniable";[1] but, besides its name, it possesses certain features which distinguish it advantageously from ordinary war.

First, instead of the barbarous effusion of blood and swift destruction which open hostilities entail, the pacific blockade achieves its ends by more refined and leisurely means: one is not shocked by the unseemly sights of a battlefield, and the wielder of the weapon has time to watch its effects as they develop: he can see the victim going through the successive stages of misery—debility, languor, exhaustion—until the final point is reached; and as his scientific curiosity is gratified by the gradual manifestation of the various symptoms, so his moral sense is fortified by the struggle between a proud spirit and an empty stomach—than which life can offer no more ennobling spectacle. Then, unlike crude war, the pacific blockade automatically strikes the nation at which it is aimed on its weakest side first: instead of having to begin with its manhood, one begins with its old men, its women, and its infants. The merits of this form of attack are evident: many a man who would boldly face starvation himself, may be reasonably expected to flinch at the prospect of a starving mother,

[1] See the article on "Pacific Blockade" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (10th Ed.), Vol. XXXI, p. 401.

wife, or child. Lastly, whilst in war the assailant must inevitably suffer as well as inflict losses, the pacific blockade renders him absolutely exempt from all risk. For "it can only be employed as a measure of coercion by maritime Powers able to bring into action such vastly superior forces to those the resisting State can dispose of, that resistance is out of the question."[1]

In brief, the pacific blockade is not war, but a kind of sport, as safe as coursing, and to the educated mind much more interesting. The interest largely depends on the duration of the blockade, and its duration on the victims' physical and moral resources.

When the blockade was proclaimed on the 8th of December, Allied journalists predicted that its persuasive force would be felt very soon. The country, they reasoned, owing to the manifold restrictions imposed upon its overseas trade by the Anglo-French Fleet, had been on short commons for some time past. The total stoppage of maritime traffic would bring it to the verge of famine within a week. And, in fact, before the end of the month Greece was feeling the pinch.[2] As might have been expected, the first to feel it were the poor. Both the authorities and private societies did their utmost to protect them by keeping prices down, and to relieve them by the free distribution of food and other necessaries.[3] But, although the achievement was great, it could not prove equal to the dimensions of the need. The stoppage of all maritime traffic caused a cessation of industry and threw out of employment thousands of working-people. As the factories grew empty of labourers, the streets grew full of beggars. The necessary adulteration of the flour produced epidemics of dysentery and poisoning, especially among children and old people, while numerous deaths among infants were attributed by the doctors to want of milk in their mothers' breasts. Presently bread, the staple food of the Greeks, disappeared, and all classes took

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *The Times*, 9, 19, 21, 30 Dec., 1916.

[3] Among these charitable organizations the foremost place belongs to the "Patriotic League of Greek Women," which, under the competent management of the Queen, was able to distribute 10,000 meals a day, as well as clothes, blankets, medicine, milk for infants, etc.

to carob-beans and herbs.[1] On 22 February a lady of the highest Athenian society wrote to a friend in London: "If we were in England, we should all be fined for cruelty to animals. As there is no flour, our tiny portions of bread are made of oats, and rather rotten ones, that had been reserved for the cab-horses. Now the poor things have nothing to eat and have become a collection of Apocalyptic beasts. We go on foot as much as we can, as they really could not carry us."

Next to bread, the most prominent article of Greek diet is fish. The French, who in their treatment of this neutral nation gave evidence of a thoroughness and efficiency such as they did not always display in their operations against the enemy, saw to it that this source of subsistence also should, within the measure of their ability, fail their victims. French cruisers stopped the fishing-smacks and asked if their community had joined the Rebellion. When the answer was in the negative, they sank the vessel and confiscated the tackle, often accompanying the robbery of property with violence on the persons of the owners and abuse of their sovereign. To the wretched fishermen's protests, the French commanders replied: "If you want to be left alone, you have only to drive out your King."[2]

These speeches confirmed the general suspicion that the ultimate object of the blockade was to propagate rebellion. Other things spoke even more eloquently. The few cargoes of flour that arrived in Greece now and then were sequestered by the Allies and sent to the Salonica Government, which used them as a bait, inviting the King's subjects through its agents to sell their allegiance for a loaf of bread. Generally the reply was: "We prefer to die."[3] Of this stubborn endurance, the women of modern Greece gave instances that recall the days of ancient Sparta. In a village near Eleusis, on the Sunday preceding Lent, the matrons and maidens set up a dance, and while dancing they improvised songs in praise of Hunger. At the end,

[1] Zalocostas to Greek Legations abroad, 25 Jan./7 Feb.; 3/16 Feb.; 12/25 March, 1917.

[2] Zalocostas to Greek Legations abroad, 3/16 Feb.; to French Minister at Athens, 16/29 March, 1917.

[3] Zalocostas to Greek Legations abroad, 25 Jan./7 Feb.; 15/28 Feb.; 12/25 March.

the men who stood round listening with tears in their eyes, burst into frenetic cheers for the King.[1]

Never, indeed, in the hour of his triumphs had King Constantine been so near the hearts of his people as he was in this period of their common affliction. Although the operation-wounds in his ribs were still open, he met the emergency with dauntless fortitude, and never for a moment forgot his part, either as a prince or as a man. "The King is wonderful," wrote the correspondent already quoted. "He never complains, and gives us all courage." Many a time, as the weary months dragged on, he went over his past course, asking himself: "Could he have been mistaken, after all?" No; the more he pondered, the more convinced he felt that what he had done was the best for Greece. Now, if the worst came to the worst, his sincerity at least could not be questioned. When his friends ventured to express their admiration of his stoicism, he answered simply: "I know that I am doing right." The great source whence he derived consolation amidst all his calamities was undoubtedly this consciousness of rectitude: a sense which in him seems to have been as free from arrogance as it was from rancour.

The people who had formerly admired their sovereign as a hero, now revered him as a martyr; and the man upon whom they visited their anger was he whom they regarded as the true cause of their misery. After his flight to Salonica M. Venizelos was never mentioned except by the name of The Traitor; after the events of 1 December he was formally impeached as one; and after the blockade had been in force for some weeks, he was solemnly anathematized: on 26 December, the Archbishop of Athens, from a cairn of stones in the midst of a great multitude, pronounced the curse of the Church upon "the traitor, Venizelos." The Government had forbidden the demonstration, but that did not prevent myriads of people from going to add their own stone to the monument.[2] One old woman was heard, as she cast her contribution, crying: "We made him Premier; but he was not content. He would make himself king. Anathema!" Subsequently, every village and hamlet repeated the ceremony. "These

[1] *The Nea Himera*, 15/28 Feb., 1917.
[2] Zalocostas to Greek Legations abroad, 14/27 Dec., 1916.

spontaneous ceremonies," observes an eye-witness, "were vastly more indicative than any elections could ever have been of the place to which the great Cretan had fallen in the esteem of his countrymen."[1]

Appeals from the Holy Synod of the Greek Church to the Pope and the heads of other Christian Churches availed as little as the appeals of the Greek Government to Allied and neutral Governments. Month after month the blockade went on, and each month produced its own tale of suffering: deaths due directly to starvation; diseases due to the indirect effects of inanition; a whole nation wasting for want of food; horses starved to provide it; mothers praying to God for their daily bread with babes drooping at their desiccated bosoms.[2] Yet of yielding there was no sign: "Give in?" said a woman outside a soup-kitchen at the Piræus, in March. "We will eat our children first!"

In such a manner this ancient race, which has lived so long, done so much, and suffered so much, bore its martyrdom. By such an exercise of self-discipline it defied the Powers of Civilisation to do their worst. In spite of the licence given to brute force, in spite of the removal of the machinery of civil control, in spite of the internment of the army and its arms, in spite of the ostentatiously paraded support to the Rebel, in spite of actual famine and the threat of imminent ruin, the people held to the institutions of their country, rallied to their King; and expressed their scorn for the usurper of his authority by inscribing over the graves of their babies: "Here lies my child, starved to death by Venizelos."

[1] Paxton Hibben, p. 522.

[2] The Censorship succeeded in keeping these facts, as it kept many others, from the British public; they were not suitable subjects for war propaganda.

CHAPTER XVII

IT seems now proper to return to M. Venizelos and to consider in some detail the other measures which he and his patrons at this time adopted for the purpose of consolidating and extending his dominion.

As we have seen, shortly after the Cretan's installation at Salonica, the Entente Powers, by a diplomatic fiction, decided to treat his Committee as a *de facto* Government. It was not until his countrymen impeached him as a traitor that the recognition assumed a *de jure* character, by the appointment of duly accredited diplomatic agents to his capital. These steps were accompanied by other marks of sympathy. While the Allies negotiated with the King, their naval commanders canvassed for M. Venizelos—sweeping islands under his sway: Syra was first shepherded into the fold, and a little later the rest of the Cyclades.

A brief suspension of operations supervened as a result of the solemn promise given to Athens that the Allies would neither by land nor by sea allow the extension of the revolutionary movement. For an instant the Entente respected its own pledges. Just before the surrender of the Lambros Cabinet, on 10 January, the Cretan had rushed to establish another accomplished fact by liberating the island of Cerigo; but, on the Government's protest, the Allies obliged him to undo his accomplishment; though, on the plea that the island would resent being replaced under King Constantine's yoke, it was made temporarily autonomous.[1]

Soon, however, these pledges went the way of all words. Between February and May, Cephalonia, Zante, and Corfu

[1] Zalocostas to Greek Legations, Paris, London, Rome, Petrograd, 30 Dec./12 Jan.; to Entente Legations, Athens, 19 Jan./1 Feb.; 8/21 March, 1917. For a full and intimate account of this intrigue, somewhat ambitiously styled "The Conquest of Cerigo," see Lawson, pp. 241 foll.

were converted one by one: everywhere the apostles from Salonica preaching, "Be our brethren or die of hunger"; and everywhere having behind them the guns of France and England to enforce respect for their gospel. The instance of Leucas, the last of the Ionian Isles to be gathered into the fold, will suffice as an illustration. In the middle of March a French vessel, carrying a consignment of maize, rice, and Venizelist missionaries, called at the island and invited the inhabitants to come, buy, and be saved: they answered that they would never touch food brought by traitors. Towards the end of May, the French Admiral commanding the Ionian Reserve was able to announce that the Leucadian population had joined the National Movement.[1]

To secure his authority over these maritime possessions, the Cretan obtained from his patrons some of the warships of which they had robbed the King.

A similar propaganda was simultaneously going on in the "neutral zone" and in the lands to the south of it—particularly Thessaly—whose immunity from emancipation the Allies had also guaranteed. Only, as this region lay nearer to the base of the Franco-Venizelist Mission, it benefited more severely from its influence. General Sarrail's patrols raided the villages, harrying the peasants and sparing not even the honour of their women. Anyone who knows the Greek peasant's fierce views on feminine chastity can imagine the indignation which such an outrage would have aroused in any case; but in this case their horror was deepened by the circumstance that the assailants sometimes were African semi-savages—the Senegalese whom France brought to Greece, as to other parts of Europe, oblivious of the most rudimentary dictates of decency and sound policy. On one occasion (22 Feb.) the coloured libertines paid for their lust with their lives: a patrol of a dozen of them was surprised and massacred.[2]

Summary executions were among the methods of

[1] Zalocostas to Greek Ministers abroad, 12/25 March; *The Nea Himera*, 8/21 March; Exchange Tel., Athens, 16 April, 28 May, 1917.

[2] General Sarrail mentions the punishment (Sarrail, p. 235), but not the provocation. This, together with other atrocities, is the subject of a Note from M. Zalocostas to the French Minister at Athens, 9/22 March, 1917.

military tyranny in which General Sarrail rejoiced without scruple and with a certain brutal pride. When once he found himself obliged to justify his conduct, he wrote: "The six inhabitants of Dianitza, who were shot, were *Comitadjis*. There is no doubt in that respect. Doubt still exists about eight others. If they are proved to be in the same case as the former, they will be shot in the same way. The two men shot at Lourani were put to death because they were known to be *Comitadjis*. The other two, whose houses were burnt down, are likewise *Comitadjis*: they would have been shot, if they were not away: they shall be, if they are caught. If a church has been burnt down, it was because it had been transformed into a magazine for arms. If barley has been carried away, it has been paid for or requisitioned." After some more statements of the same enlightening kind, the gallant soldier concludes: "To sum up, the Greek Government organizes bands and maintains them. The security of our Army in the Orient exacts their suppression. I have given orders to put to death all irregulars. These orders have been carried out: they shall continue to be carried out."[1]

It was by precisely similar arguments that General von Bissing justified his severities in Belgium: with this difference, that in Greece the danger never existed. *Comitadjis*—bands of irregulars—did exist; it would have been strange if the adherents of the King had not done everything to counter the efforts of his enemies. Long before this period the French Secret Service, Admiral Dartige du Fournet tells us, had been busy equipping guerillas on the frontier.[2] Further, in the mainland, as in the islands, the Venizelist recruiting sergeants sought "volunteers" by force: "How many villages had to be surrounded by constabulary. . . . How much shooting had to be done to keep the men of military age from escaping. . . . How many deserters or those unwilling to serve had to be rounded up from hiding places!" exclaims General Sarrail.[3] Some of the recruits thus enlisted snatched at the earliest opportunity of regaining

[1] *Le Temps*, 11 April, 1917; Sarrail, pp. 236–7.
[2] Du Fournet, p. 116.
[3] "La Grèce Vénizeliste," in the *Revue de Paris*, 15 Dec., 1919.

their freedom: they fell in during the day, and at night they fled with their arms.

The assertion that these bands were organized and maintained by the Greek Government to harass the Allies and keep the line of communication with Albania open, with a view to an eventual junction between the forces of King Constantine and those of the German Emperor, rested on evidence which, for some obscure reason, was not produced.[1] But it supplied pretexts for action the true objects of which were not obscure.

Despite his press-gangs, in six months M. Venizelos had only succeeded in sending to the front some 10,000 men. He explained to his Western friends that he had failed to fulfil their expectations better because the neutral zone barred the extension of his movement into Thessaly.[2] He had respected that zone until now; but now that the Allies gave him a free hand over the sea, he saw no longer any reason why they should restrain him on land. Therefore, while the agents from Macedonia goaded the inhabitants to seek rest in apostacy and provoked incidents supplying an excuse for intervention, the advocates of M. Venizelos in Paris and London laboured to clear his way by publishing reports which told how the people of Thessaly prayed for liberation from the yoke of King Constantine,[3] and exhausted their ingenuity in endeavours to show the Entente publics how to break faith with honour and decency, as well as with advantage.

The victualling of the Allied army in Macedonia, always difficult, had become distressingly precarious with its own growth and the growth of the enemy's submarine activity. Were the Allies to go on transporting food and fodder from distant lands across dangerous seas, with the rich cornfields of Thessaly within short and safe reach of their trenches? The seizure of the Thessalian granary, besides

[1] Such a project is only discussed in some of the messages exchanged between Athens and Berlin in December, 1916 (*White Book*, Nos. 177, 183, 186)—before the definite acceptance of the Allies' terms by the Lambros Cabinet. But there is absolutely nothing to show that the idea ever materialised.

[2] *The New Europe*, 29 March, 1917.

[3] See telegrams, dated Salonica, 29 March, published in the London Press by the Anglo-Hellenic League; letter from *The Times* correspondent, dated Syra, 23 April, 1917, etc., etc.

helping to keep the Allies in plenty, would help to reduce the Royalists to despair by robbing them of the harvest to which they looked forward with strained eyes and tightened belts. In this wise both military and political problems could be solved by one masterly stroke.

In April, General Sarrail obtained from his Government the orders he had been soliciting since January, to go to Thessaly and seize the crops; only, as the offensive against the Bulgars deprived him of adequate means for the moment, he decided to put off the stroke until the middle of May.[1]

Alarmed by these sudden, though not wholly unexpected, developments, King Constantine dismissed Professor Lambros, and had once more recourse to M. Zaimis; hoping that this statesman, the only non-Venizelist Greek whom the slander of Germanophilism had left untouched, might prove able to placate the Allies. M. Zaimis, as in all previous crises, so now obeyed the call and set himself to discover some path out of the wood (2 May). On the one hand, he opened negotiations with the Entente Ministers; on the other, he tried to bring about a reconciliation with M. Venizelos—the King being understood to be willing to meet the Cretan half-way.

M. Venizelos, on his part, alarmed by the prospect of a *rapprochement* between Athens and the Entente Powers, set himself, as on all similar occasions, to impugn the Hellenic Government's sincerity. At a signal from the Conductor, all the instruments of the orchestra broke into the familiar chorus. The whole Press of France and England rang again with calumny and fairy-tale. Out they came again in regular sequence and with unvarying monotony: plots and secret letters, weird stories of German intrigue, constant repetition of names compromised or compromising; all ready, cut and dried, for burking any attempt at accommodation that did not include the return and domination of the Great Cretan.

It was maintained that the formation of a Government under M. Zaimis was but a new artifice of King Constantine, adopted at the Kaiser's suggestion, to temporize by ostensibly throwing over a few of his Germanophile favourites. During more than five months he had contrived

[1] Sarrail, p. 238.

to checkmate the blockade by drawing on the reserves of food he had laid up at his depots. Now those reserves were exhausted: he needed the Thessalian corn to replenish his magazines, to feed and increase his army, so that in the fullness of time he might bring it out of the Peloponnesus against the Allies.[1]

Even more sinister were the motives which prompted the King's advances to the Cretan. While holding out the right hand to M. Venizelos, Constantine with the left aimed a dagger at his heart: a band of eleven assassins had just been arrested at Salonica on a charge of conspiring to murder him—to murder him in the very midst of his own and his allies' military forces, and under circumstances which made detection certain and escape impossible. Even thus: "their plan was to arrange a banquet to which M. Venizelos would have been invited. *They are said* to have confessed that they were sent from Athens to kill the Head of the National Government and were promised £4,000 for the murder."[2]

Day by day it became increasingly clear that the question of Thessaly formed only part of the larger question of Greece; that behind the campaign for the crops lurked the conspiracy against the King. A "radical solution" was demanded, on the ground that so long as he reigned at Athens we could not consider Greece a friendly neutral. The Greek organ of M. Venizelos in London now openly described the Cretan as a man sent to heal Hellas of the "dynastic canker," and expressed the opinion that the healing could only be effected by "Prussian methods."[3]

During the whole of May this concert of sophistry and calumny went on: now sinking into low, deadly whispers; now swelling into an uproar that rolled like a mighty, muddy river in flood through every Allied capital, ministering to the inarticulate craving of the public for fresh sensations, thrilling its nerves, and feeding its hate and fear of King Constantine. At the end of the month the curtain went up, and M. Venizelos stepped forward to

[1] For details of this apocryphal scheme see a report from Salonica, dated 16 May, disseminated by the Anglo-Hellenic League; *The Times*, 8 and 30 May; the *Daily Mail*, 9 and 30 May, 1917.

[2] *The Times*, 14 May, 1917, dispatch dated Salonica 11 May.

[3] *The Hesperia*, 11, 18, 25 May, 1917.

make the declaration for which his instrumental music had prepared our minds: "I reject all idea of reconciliation firmly, flatly, and finally!"

His confederates and subordinates, as usual, went further: Admiral Coundouriotis: "Neither in this world nor in the next will I have anything to do with King Constantine or his dynasty."

Minister Politis: "No compromise is possible between Liberal Greece and the reigning dynasty."

Minister Averoff: "The one and most important thing is that the dynasty of Constantine should, like the Turks, be turned bag and baggage out of Greece."[1]

So the Great Cretan and his company had given up at last pretending that their plot was not directed against their King, or that they intended to postpone the settlement of their accounts with him till after the War. Their relief must have been proportionate to the strain: it is not hypocrisy, but the need of consistency that harasses a hypocrite. But their outburst of candour was chiefly interesting as an index to the attitude of the Powers from whom they derived their significance.

France had long since made up her mind on the deposition of Constantine, if not indeed on the subversion of the Greek throne. Apart from the hold upon Greece which they would gain by placing her under a ruler created by and consequently dependent on them, French politicians did not lose sight of the popularity which the sacrifice of a king—and that king, too, the Kaiser's brother-in-law—would earn them among their own compatriots. Further, a triumph of French policy over Greece was calculated to obscure in the eyes of the French public the failure of French strategy against Bulgaria: "For me the destruction of Athens the Germanic came second to the struggle against Sofia," wrote General Sarrail[2]; and there were those who believed that his expedition had for its primary objective Athens rather than Sofia.

For a time French politicians had flattered themselves that their aim would be attained by an explosion from within. But it was gradually borne in upon them that the National Movement represented but a small minority

[1] *The Times*, 30 May, 1917.
[2] Sarrail, p. 234.

of the nation. That truth first became manifest in the summer of 1916, when the demobilization set the Reservists loose—the Reservists upon whom M. Venizelos had miscounted: their verdict was conclusive; for they were drawn from all districts and all classes of the community: the tillers of the plains, the shepherds of the hills, the fishermen who lived by the sea, the traders, the teachers, the lawyers—they represented, in one word, the whole population of military age. The disillusion was furthered by the swift suppression of the seditious attempt on 1 December, and was completed by the Blockade, which demonstrated the solidarity of the nation in a manner that utterly upset the calculations and disconcerted the plans of its authors. Instead of a people ready, after a week or two of privation, to sue for mercy—to revolt against their sovereign and succumb to his rival—the French found in every bit of Old Greece—from Mount Pindus to Cape Malea—a nation nerved to the highest pitch of endurance: prepared to suffer hunger and disease without a murmur, and when the hour should come, to die as those die who possess things they value more than life. This was not what the inventors of the Pacific Blockade contemplated: this was not sport: this was strife—strife of strength with strength.

There was nothing left but force—the danger of creating a new front had been eliminated by the internment of the army, and by the blockade which had succeeded, if not in breaking the spirit of the people, in reducing it to such a state of misery that it now offered a safe subject for attack. M. Ribot, who had replaced M. Briand as Premier and Minister for Foreign Affairs, adopted this "radical solution." He proposed to dispatch to Athens a plenipotentiary charged with the mission of deposing King Constantine, raising M. Venizelos to dictatorial power, and thus establishing the influence of France throughout Greece.

There remained some difficulties of a diplomatic character. Russia had never viewed her ally's uncompromising hostility to King Constantine with enthusiasm. But the French thought that this attitude was due to dynastic ties and monarchic sympathies, and expected the downfall of the Tsar to change it: they could hardly

imagine that the Russian Republic would withdraw even that reluctant co-operation in the coercion of Greece which the Russian Empire had accorded; and, at any rate, the voice of a country in the throes of internal disintegration could have little effect upon the march of external events.

The decision really lay between France and England. England's, like Russia's, co-operation hitherto had been but a concession to France. Neither the Foreign Office nor the War Office had ever taken the Salonica Expedition seriously; and both departments would gladly have washed their hands of a business barren of profit and credit alike. But the motives which had impelled London to keep Paris company so far were as potent as ever, and English politicians had hitherto proved themselves so pliant that, provided French pressure continued, the utmost which could be apprehended from them was a feeble show of resistance followed by abject acquiescence. Notwithstanding the moderation England had insisted upon at the Boulogne and Rome Conferences, France had managed to lead her from violence to violence, till this last iniquity, to the logical French mind, seemed inevitable.

CHAPTER XVIII

AT the end of May, M. Ribot, accompanied by M. Painlevé, Minister of War, came to London and laid before the British Government his solution. Again our allies found on this side of the Channel "*des scrupules*"; and again they set themselves to demonstrate that "*des scrupules, si légitimes soient-ils,*" weigh light against interests. Even when the principle was conceded, there still lingered some disquietude regarding the practicability of bringing about the King's dethronement without bloodshed. But the French did not share this disquietude, and, after three days' hard talking, they converted the English Ministers to their point of view. It was agreed that the operation should be carried out without war. The only measures of a military nature to which the British Government consented were the establishment in Thessaly of outposts for the control of the crops, and the occupation of the Isthmus of Corinth, should King Constantine attempt to move his army out of the Peloponnesus: unless the King committed acts of hostility, no violence should be used. Having thus satisfied their conscience, the British Ministers abstained from any closer scrutiny.[1]

The task was entrusted to M. Jonnart, a Senator of large African experience, who, armed with the title of High Commissioner of the Protecting Powers of Greece, set out at once "to re-establish the constitutional verity"—such was the formula. "His Majesty King Constantine, having manifestly violated, on his own initiative, the Constitution of which France, Great Britain, and Russia are the guarantors, has lost the confidence of the Protecting Powers, and they consider themselves released from the obligations to him resulting from their rights of protection."[2]

With the violation of the Constitution by King Constantine we have already dealt exhaustively. We must here

[1] Jonnart, pp. 60–67. [2] *Ibid*, pp. 109–10.

deal as exhaustively with the three Powers' claim to act as its "guarantors" and their "rights of protection."

The claim rested on a phrase in the Treaty of 13 July, 1863, between them and Denmark, concerning the accession to the Hellenic throne of the late King: "Greece, under the sovereignty of Prince William of Denmark and the guarantee of the three Courts, forms a monarchical, independent, and constitutional State."[1] That guarantee was no innovation, and had no reference to the Constitution. The Protocol of the Conference held on 26 June, 1863, explains that "as regards the guarantee of the political existence of the Kingdom of Greece, the three Protecting Powers maintain simply the terms in which it is enunciated in Article IV of the Convention of 7 May, 1832,"[2]—that is, the Convention between the three Powers and Bavaria concerning the accession to the Hellenic throne of her first King. Turning to that document, we find Article IV running as follows: "Greece, under the sovereignty of the Prince Otho of Bavaria, and under the guarantee of the three Courts, shall form a monarchical and independent State, according to the terms of the Protocol signed between the said Courts on the 3rd of February, 1830, and accepted both by Greece and by the Ottoman Porte." And above it, in Article I, we read: "The Courts of Great Britain, France and Russia, duly authorized for the purpose by the Greek Nation, offer the hereditary sovereignty of Greece to the Prince Frederick Otho of Bavaria."[3] Nothing could be plainer than that the guarantee referred to the "political existence of Greece," not to her constitutional form of government, and that the three Powers in disposing of her throne acted, not by their own authority, but by the authority of the Greek Nation, which alone had the right to do so, and which exercised that right directly in choosing its last king. But this is not all. Turning to the Protocol of the 3rd of February, 1830, we read in its very first article: "Greece shall form an independent State, and shall enjoy all the rights, political, administrative and commercial, pertaining to complete independence."[4]

[1] *Nouveau Recueil Général des Traités.* By Ch. Samwer, Vol. XVII, Part ii.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Papers re Affairs of Greece*, 1830–32.

[4] *Papers re Affairs of Greece*, 1826–30.

As to the term "protection" occasionally employed by the three Powers, and by the Greeks themselves, its true sense can be shown beyond ambiguity. "Greece," wrote the Duke of Wellington, "once established and her boundaries guaranteed as proposed, she will have the same right to assistance and protection against foreign aggression as any other State in Europe, of which there are many, which exercise an independent action in all their concerns, external as well as internal." Far from claiming to limit her independence in any way, the British Foreign Secretary emphatically declared "that the permanent policy of this country towards Greece must be friendly, if Greece should be really independent and conduct herself as an independent Power."[1]

Likewise, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, tracing the history of events and negotiations which culminated in the establishment of Greek freedom, dwelt on France's successful desire "not only to liberate Greece from the Ottoman yoke, but to make of Greece a real State, a State independent in right and in fact, a State that should not be put officially under the tutelage of anyone, a State that should not need any perpetual semi-official intervention." By thus making Greece "free to choose her friends and allies," and "not under anyone's protection," the French expected that she would "look towards France, who can promise her, in need, her assistance without menacing her with her protection." The Minister concluded by boasting that "the success is complete. Greece exists, she is independent. All Europe recognizes her: she depends on no Power either as sovereign or as guarantor."[2]

Since the date of these documents and statements, practice had confirmed the principles enunciated in them. As a completely independent Power Greece had waged wars and concluded treaties with other Powers. It is true that on certain occasions she was prevented from fighting by coercive measures; but these measures were not taken by the three Powers—sometimes they were

[1] Wellington to Prince Leopold, 10 Feb., 1830. *State Papers*, 1829–30.

[2] Duc de Broglie's Speech, 18 May, 1833. *Écrits et Discours*, Vol. II, pp. 415 foll.

taken by two alone; sometimes by the whole Concert of Europe—nor were they taken in virtue of any right other than the right of the stronger. Likewise, Greece had framed and revised her Constitution, dethroned and enthroned Kings without asking anyone's permission or sanction. It is true that in her domestic revolutions the influence of the three Powers could be plainly detected, but it was wholly in the nature of backstairs intrigue—carried on by each against the others—such as even the greatest Empires experience on the part of interested outsiders. In short, since its birth until 1916, no one had dreamt of questioning the status of the Hellenic Kingdom as a completely independent Power, or attempted to give to "the guarantee of the political existence of Greece," which aimed at securing her against external aggression, the interpretation that it referred to her form of government and conferred a right of interference in her internal affairs.

The present interference, clearly, had no more legal basis than all the other invasions to which Greece had submitted during the War under protest. Casuistry was merely called in to cloak the exigencies of policy: King Constantine's dethronement was decreed, not because it was lawful, but because France required it, and England, for good reasons, could not let France bring it about alone: what Russia thought of the transaction, she soon let the whole world know with disconcerting bluntness. Petrograd not only withdrew her troops from the performance, but made short work of the "guarantee" and "protection" quibbles by roundly declaring that "the choice of the form of government in Greece, as well as its administrative organization, appertains exclusively to the Greek people."[1]

Meanwhile M. Jonnart sped eastward, eager and determined to serve the Imperialist ambitions of the French Republic in the Orient. His mandate gave him unlimited choice of means, diplomatic and military, and he fully justified the trust placed in his tact. On the maxim that, the more prompt the display of force, the less likely the occasion to use it, he decided, contrary to the instructions he had received in London, not to wait and see whether

[1] Communiqué of the Russian Government, Reuter, Petrograd, 7 July, 1917.

King Constantine meditated hostile acts or not; he arranged for the necessary naval measures with Admiral Gauchet, whom he met off Corfu, and, after a brief stop in the Road of Salamis, he hastened to Salonica, where he arranged with General Sarrail for the military measures: a simultaneous invasion of Thessaly, occupation of the Isthmus of Corinth, and a landing at Athens. At the same time he conferred with M. Venizelos, who pronounced all these arrangements excellent, and suggested that, after the removal of the King, he must give the public mind time to calm down before returning to Athens: in the interval M. Zaimis might be left in power. The period of transition should perhaps last several months: a prudent counsel with which M. Jonnart fully concurred: both he and M. Ribot recognized the danger of hurrying the return of the Cretan to a city which he had been describing as ready to embrace him. The programme settled in all its details, M. Jonnart left Salonica with General Regnault, who was put in command of the divisions told off for Corinth and Athens, and in the evening of 9 June arrived in the Road of Salamis, where he took up his abode on board the ironclad *Justice*.[1]

Here the most delicate part of his mission, and the one in which he displayed most of his tact, commenced. On the following evening (10 June) he met M. Zaimis on board the *Bruix* at the Piræus. It was, as we know, essential that M. Zaimis should be induced to remain in power for a while, to bridge over the gap between the deposition of the King and the elevation of M. Venizelos. But it was most unlikely that M. Zaimis would consent to play the part assigned to him, if he knew what he was doing. Therefore, at this first interview M. Jonnart did not think fit to demand anything more than the control of the Thessalian crops and the occupation of the Isthmus of Corinth. Agreeably surprised at demands which fell so far short of the objects with which rumour had credited the High Commissioner, the Premier raised no difficulties; and M. Jonnart, in order "to gain his confidence," spoke to him with his usual "accent of loyalty and frankness" about the magnificent future the Protecting Powers had in store for Greece. Then, under the pretence that he was awaiting

[1] Jonnart, pp. 70–95.

fresh instructions that night, he made another appointment for the following morning.[1]

The Greek left, and next morning (11 June) returned to hear more. At this second interview M. Jonnart handed to him an Ultimatum with a twenty-four hours' limit, demanding that the King should abdicate and go, after naming as his successor, not the legitimate Heir, but his second son—a young man who, having no will of his own, was highly recommended by M. Venizelos. Thus the re-establishment of constitutional verity was to begin with the violation of a fundamental article of the Constitution—the succession by order of primogeniture.[2] M. Zaimis stood aghast—"wrung with emotion." M. Jonnart spoke eloquently and urgently: the Powers only sought the unity and liberty of Greece—the greatness of Greece, now divided, partly dismembered, in a state of anarchy, on the eve of civil war. The High Commissioner would do all that in him lay that the change of reign might be accomplished in the most pacific manner. He appealed warmly to the Premier's patriotism.[3]

According to some accounts, he added two more instances of his "loyalty and frankness" by stating that, when the War was over, the Powers would have no objection to the restoration of King Constantine, if such should be the wish of the Greek people—a statement which he authorized M. Zaimis to publish;[4] and that they had no intention to bring M. Venizelos back: as soon as the unity of Greece was achieved, the Salonica Government would disappear; only later on M. Venizelos might return to office by the legal way and after new elections. On the other hand, if the Ultimatum was not executed, he threatened the downfall of the whole dynasty, the forcible establishment of a Republic, and the immediate return of M. Venizelos.[5]

The interview ended with a grim declaration by M. Jonnart that, unless his decree was obeyed to the letter, he would do to Athens what the Germans had done to his native Arras—reduce it to a heap of ruins.[6]

[1] Jonnart, pp. 102–4. [2] See Art. 45. [3] Jonnart, pp. 109–12.
[4] When the Greek Premier did so, M. Jonnart repudiated it as "a mistake of M. Zaimis."—See *The Times*, 11 July, 1917.
[5] *Le Départ du Roi Constantin*, Geneva, 1917, pp. 13, 14.
[6] Jonnart, p. 113.

There could be no doubt that M. Jonnart meant business: he was an ex-Governor of Algeria; his mentality and his methods had been formed in the African school of International Law. Remonstrance was futile and resistance would be fatal: a column was already marching into Thessaly; part of an army corps had landed at Corinth; a powerful squadron rode off Salamis with its guns trained on Athens; troops were in the ports of Piræus and Phaleron ready at a signal to land and march on the capital. Confronted with the choice either to help in the pacific liberation of his country or to witness its devastation, M. Zaimis chose the lesser evil; and M. Jonnart was able to report, with pardonable complacency: "I persuaded him to continue in office, to take the message demanding his abdication to the King, and to advise the King to accept."[1]

With this message the Premier hurried off to Athens and straightway communicated it to his sovereign. Immediately a Crown Council was called at the Palace. Besides M. Zaimis, all the ex-Premiers and leaders of parties were present: Rallis, Dragoumis, Skouloudis, Gounaris, Lambros, Calogeropoulos, Dimitracopoulos, Stratos. From the first the King announced that he had decided to accept the Ultimatum and leave Greece with the Crown Prince, in order to spare her greater calamities, such as would result from a conflict with the Entente Powers.

Whether Constantine would not have been better advised to have opposed the landing of the Allies at Salonica; or interned their army when he had it at his mercy; or arrested Admiral Dartige du Fournet and his marines and held them, together with the Entente Ministers and subjects, as hostages: whether by any of those acts he might not have escaped this final blow, was now of small account: though the point provides matter for very interesting speculation. Now, with his troops and arms bottled up in the Peloponnesus and his people reduced by starvation to helplessness, all chance of escape was cut off. A pitiful situation, no doubt, but more pitiful had he attempted resistance. In such event, the Powers would immediately declare that a state of war existed

[1] *The Times*, 11 July, 1917.

and France might acquire a permanent footing by right of conquest.[1]

Nevertheless, two only of the statesmen assembled, M. Zaimis and M. Stratos, pronounced in favour of submission. The rest were against it. True, they argued, Greece completely disarmed could offer no effective resistance to the armies and fleets which hemmed her in on every side. Yet it were better that the King should let violence be used against him, better that he should be made the Powers' prisoner, than yield. His hopes of sparing Greece greater calamities by his abnegation were vain. No calamity could be greater than that which would be produced by an acceptance of M. Jonnart's Ultimatum. They recalled all the encroachments upon her neutrality, all the infringements of her sovereignty, to which Greece had submitted unresistingly, trusting to the Allies' solemn promises. And how had they kept those promises? After the violation of so many pledges, how was it possible to put faith in M. Jonnart's assurances? If the French troops pursued their march into the country, imposed upon it Venizelos by force, dragged it into the war, who could stop them? Better perish without dishonour.

Such, in substance, were the arguments used. The King remained unshaken. "We have no right to doubt the good faith of M. Jonnart," he said. Despite past experience, the man who was perpetually accused of having no scruple about breaking his word, was still slow to believe that others could break theirs. He made all present promise that they would use their utmost endeavours to have his decision accepted by the people, so that no disturbance might aggravate a situation already sufficiently menacing. They all left the Council Chamber in tears.[2]

In the afternoon a Cabinet meeting took place under the presidency of the King, who, quite unmoved by the objections and entreaties of his Ministers, persisted in his resolution. It was then decided that M. Zaimis should draw up the reply, and that the draft, after receiving the

[1] Even as it was, General Sarrail lamented the advent of M. Venizelos at Salonica as "a Greek master-stroke" calculated "to keep 'the coveted city' Greek."—Sarrail, pp. 153, 154. He evidently preferred not to have even a portion of Greece as an ally, that he might treat the whole of it as an enemy.

[2] *Le Départ du Roi Constantin*, pp. 14–18.

King's approval, should be communicated to M. Jonnart. This was done, and M. Jonnart having declared himself satisfied, the document was handed to him next morning. By that reply the Greek Premier, after noting the three Powers' demand for the abdication of King Constantine and the designation of his successor, briefly stated that "His Majesty, solicitous as always only for the interest of Greece, has decided to quit the country" (*not* to abdicate) "with the Crown Prince, and designates as his successor Prince Alexander."[1]

Thus far the High Commissioner's enterprise had prospered beyond the anticipations of the most sanguine. And now his anxieties began. From the moment of his arrival the populace, which two years of contact with the Allies had made suspicious, became very uneasy and excited. Throughout the night of 10 June rumours circulated that an ultimatum of an extreme nature had been presented to the Government. Groups were formed in the streets and squares, discussing the situation, criticizing the Government bitterly, and inveighing against M. Zaimis, who, it was said, was ready to accept still more rigorous demands. The crowds grew in numbers and vehemence as the night advanced; and, in the morning of the 11th, while M. Zaimis was still with M. Jonnart, the Government, to avert disturbances, issued a *communiqué*, stating that all the rumours of fresh demands were devoid of foundation. The Premier in his first conversation with the representative of the three Powers had not detected any danger whatever either to the independence of the country or to the dynasty or to the régime. On the contrary, M. Jonnart had expressed the will of the Powers to see Greece great, strong, and absolutely independent. Consequently the Greek people ought to remain quiet, certain that by its peaceful conduct it would contribute to the success of the King's and the Government's efforts.[2]

This declaration had calmed the public for a few hours. But after the return of M. Zaimis from his second interview with the High Commissioner, the object of M. Jonnart's mission began to leak out: the whisper went round that the King's abdication was demanded. The hasty

[1] Jonnart, pp. 116–7.
[2] *Le Départ du Roi Constantin*, p. 11.

convocation of a Crown Council intensified the public uneasiness. The special measures for the maintenance of order taken by the authorities, the advice to keep calm whatever happened, which emanated from every influential quarter, the haggard faces of all those who came out of the Palace, left no doubt that something very serious was afoot. More, it became known that during the night the Isthmus of Corinth had been occupied by large numbers of French troops which had taken up the rails of the line joining the Peloponnesus to the capital, that the French fleet in Salamis Strait had been reinforced, that the three Powers' Ministers had quitted their Legations and nobody knew where they had slept. Hour by hour the popular distress increased, until late in the afternoon the news spread through the town that the King had decided to go; and as it spread, the shops closed, the church bells began to toll as for a funeral, and masses of people rushed from every side towards the Palace, to prevent the King from going. Soon all approaches to the Palace were blocked and the building itself was completely besieged by a crowd of agitated men and sobbing women, all demanding to see their sovereign, and shouting: "Don't go! Don't go!"

Numerous deputations appeared before the King and implored him to change his mind—in vain. To one of them, sent by the officers of the Athens garrison, he spoke as follows: "You know my decision. The interest of our country demands that all, be they civilians or soldiers, should submit to discipline. Keep calm and preserve your prudence." To a delegation composed of the heads of the city guilds he replied: "In the interests of the State, gentlemen, I am obliged to leave the country. The people must have confidence in my advisers. God will always be with us, and Greece will become happy again. I adjure you, gentlemen, in the name of the Almighty, to offer no opposition. Any reaction would be in the highest degree dangerous to the State. If I, born and bred in Athens and Greek to the marrow of my bones, decide to go, I don't do so, you understand well, except in order to save my people and my country. Pray go to your corporations and our fellow-citizens and tell them to cease from gathering: to be calm and sensible,

because the King, at this moment, is performing a sacred duty."[1]

The same delegation succeeded in reaching M. Zaimis, and on coming out it published through a special edition of a journal the result: "The Premier, with tears in his eyes, and the other three Ministers present at the audience, after relating the sequence of political events which have led to this cruel decision about our beloved King, begged us to advise the people in his name to face the crisis with sang-froid, and to assure it that the abdication of the King is but temporary, since, according to M. Jonnart's declaration, it rests with the people to call him back after the War; that all resistance on the part of the people will result in the abolition of the dynasty and the establishment of a Republic under Venizelos; that the Allies would not recoil from a bombardment of the capital and a military occupation; but if the people keep quiet, there will be no military occupation of Athens, only some soldiers may land at the Piræus to stretch their legs—and so on."[2]

Nothing, however, could allay the popular agony. As darkness fell, Athens presented a strange sight—silent figures marching, one after another, towards where King Constantine was spending his last night in his capital. They made their forlorn pilgrimage without the least noise, and as they went they passed other groups returning with equal noiselessness. "It was," says an eye-witness, "as if the people of Athens were visiting a tomb or a lying-in-state."[3]

A crowd remained on guard all night long. About 4.30 a.m. a motor car was seen drawing up at a side entrance of the Palace. The crowd recognized the King's chauffeur and guessed that he had come for the King and the royal family, who presently appeared at the door. The guardsmen threw themselves on the ground as much as to say that the vehicle must pass over their bodies. The King and royal family withdrew, and the car went away empty. Two other attempts to leave the Palace proved equally unsuccessful. The crowd would not let any door be opened. Compact and silent, it mounted guard.

[1] *Le Départ du Roi Constantin*, pp. 28–9.
[2] *Le Départ du Roi Constantin*, pp. 26–7.
[3] *The Weekly Dispatch*, 17 June, 1917.

So passed the night; and the morning (12 June) dawned on the faithful men and women who watched by the Palace. The churches again began to toll funeral peals, and again thousands began flowing in the same direction: the whole town through all its streets—mournful groups, soon waxing to mournful multitudes, and other multitudes, streamed on. From an early hour the Palace was again entirely surrounded:

"We will not let you go," they shouted. "We want our King!"

This was the answer the people made to the farewell message which the King had caused to be posted at the street corners: "Obeying necessity, and performing my duty towards Greece, I am departing from my beloved country with my heir, leaving my son Alexander on the throne. I beg you to accept my decision with serenity, trusting to God, whose blessing I invoke on the nation. And that this sacrifice may not be in vain, I adjure all of you, if you love God, if you love your country, if, lastly, you love me, not to make any disturbance, but to remain submissive. The least disorder, even if prompted by a lofty sentiment, may to-day lead to the most terrible disasters. At this moment the greatest solace for the Queen and myself lies in the affection and devotion which you have always shown to us, in the happy days as in the unhappy. May God protect Greece.—Constantine R."[1] Motionless and silent groups read this message; but the crowd outside the Palace went on crying, monotonously: "No! No!" and "He mustn't go!"

These things began to fill the emissary of the Protecting Powers with uneasiness. He felt that a clear manifestation of the fact that the King had been superseded must be given to the populace.[2] A proclamation in King Alexander's name was accordingly issued. Simultaneously, a notice, the text of which, it is affirmed, had been settled between the Government and M. Jonnart, was published. It ran: "To-day at noon, after the administration of the oath to King Alexander, M. Jonnart by a special messenger announced to the Greek Government that it could send at once authorities to Salonica, since the Provisional Govern-

[1] *Le Départ du Roi Constantin*, pp. 30–1.
[2] M. Jonnart, in *The Times*, 11 July, 1917.

ment is henceforward dissolved. It is equally well-known that M. Venizelos shall not by any means come to Athens, and that the Powers have no ulterior design to establish him in power. Greece is nowise bound to pursue the policy of the Triumvirate, but is free to adhere to her neutrality."[1]

For all that, the people continued restive. The King's departure had been fixed for noon; but in face of the popular unwillingness to let him go, the departure seemed impossible. It became evident that the methods of persuasion which sufficed for the Premier did not suffice for the people. Something more effective than the march into distant Thessaly and the landing at remote Corinth was needed. Accordingly, the destroyers came into Phaleron Bay, and French troops began to disembark.[2] The Athenians, however, did not seem to be cowed even when they saw that the French troops advanced close to Athens. What was to be done? Was M. Jonnart, after all, to succeed no better than Admiral Dartige du Fournet? The ex-Governor of Algeria, put on his mettle, acted promptly. He sent word to M. Zaimis that the King's departure should not be any longer delayed: if the Greek police were unable to disperse the crowd, the High Commissioner was ready to send from the Piræus some companies of machine-guns.[3]

Then, at 5 p.m., a last attempt was made by the royal family to leave the Palace. It succeeded, thanks to a feint which decoyed the crowd to a side door, while the fugitives escaped by the main entrance.

The day, in spite of all forebodings, ended without a disturbance. The parade of overwhelming force by M. Jonnart and his unmistakable determination to use it mercilessly had, no doubt, convinced a populace quick to grasp a situation that opposition spelt suicide. But it was mainly the example and exhortations of their King that compelled them to suppress their rage and resign themselves to the inevitable. For—Greece is a land of paradoxes—no full-blooded Greek, whether statesman or soldier, was ever clothed with the same amplitude of authority over his countrymen as this simple, upright,

[1] *Le Départ du Roi Constantin*, p. 34.
[2] The *Weekly Dispatch*, 17 June, 1917.
[3] Jonnart, p. 128.

kindly son of a Danish father and a Russian mother, in whom the subtle Hellenes found their ideal *Basileus*.

And so the drama which had been staged for more than a year by French diplomacy was satisfactorily wound up; and the curtain fell, amid the applause of the spectators.[1]

[1] Of all English newspapers the *Weekly Dispatch* (17 June, 1917) alone gave some account of this last scene of the drama. The rest atoned for their self-denial in narrative by proportionate self-indulgence in comment. One of them described the *coup* as "a distinct gain both to *our* interests in the East and to our *moral* position in the world." British agents on the spot must have been strangely blind to this aspect of the business; for General Sarrail complains that the *coup* succeeded in spite of the obstacles raised "by our allies, the English. It was *à contre-cœur* that 500 of their men were furnished me for the descent on Thessaly. The Chief of the British Staff, no doubt by order, sought to learn my plans that he might telegraph them and ruin our action, etc."—Sarrail, p. 242. Without for a moment accepting the French General's suggestions of British double-dealing, we have every reason to believe that he was right in the view that the disgraceful affair did not enjoy British official sympathy.

CHAPTER XIX

M. JONNART celebrated his triumph with yet another proclamation by which he assured the Greek people that the "guaranteeing" Powers were there to restore Constitutional Verity and the regular working of constitutional institutions; that all reprisals against Greeks, to whatever party they might belong, would be ruthlessly repressed; that the liberty of everybody would be safeguarded; that the "protecting" Powers, respectful of the people's sovereignty, had no intention of imposing a mobilization upon it.[1]

The sincerity of these professions was soon brought to the test. While penning them, M. Jonnart had before him two lists of persons marked down for reprisals. The first contained thirty victims, foremost among them M. Gounaris, General Dousmanis, and Colonel Metaxas—M. Streit had anticipated his doom by accompanying his sovereign into exile; these were deported to Corsica. The second list comprised one hundred and thirty persons—two ex-Premiers, MM. Skouloudis and Lambros, six ex-Ministers of State, one General, one Admiral, other officers of high rank, lawyers, publicists—who were to be placed under surveillance. The King's three brothers—Princes Nicholas, Andrew, and Christopher—were banished with their families to Switzerland. In addition, certain individuals of lower class who had participated in the events of 1 and 2 December, and whose culpability was vouched for by the French Secret Service, were to be arrested and brought to book.[2]

M. Jonnart, forbidden by his diplomatic art from meddling openly in the internal affairs of the country, caused this *épuration* to be carried out through M. Zaimis. It was hard for the poor Premier to expel fellow-citizens

[1] Reuter, Athens, 16 June, 1917; Jonnart, pp. 137–40.
[2] Jonnart, pp. 147–51, 179–80.

who had occupied eminent positions and with whom he had been in close relations—not to mention the flagrant illegality of such a proceeding.[1] But how could he hope to argue successfully against a man who, under the appearances of a scrupulous conscience, recognized no law? So it came that, after a long interview on board the *Justice* (16 June), M. Zaimis fell in with M. Jonnart's wish.[2]

This rapid fulfilment of the "no reprisals" pledge was declared necessary to make Athens safe for the Allies.[3] It certainly was indispensable to make it safe for M. Venizelos, whose immediate return, by a modification of the original plan, had been resolved upon. The French, finding things composed into tranquility much sooner than they anticipated, saw no cause for delay. Was it not a fact that whenever the High Commissioner visited the capital, he met with nothing but respect, sympathy, and cries of "*Vive la France*"?[4] It was: in all ages, from the time of the Roman Consul Flamininus onwards, there have been found Greeks loving liberators more than liberty.

But M. Venizelos knew better. Whilst at Salonica, he used to assure his Western friends that "the great majority at Athens remained Venizelist. If proof be desired, it is only necessary to organize a referendum, subject, of course, to guarantees of impartiality. Let the King and his satellites be put aside for the moment, let controllers be appointed from all countries . . . and let the people be asked to vote freely. . . . I am sure of a great majority. Let them take me at my word!"[5] When, however, the King and his satellites were about to be put aside, M. Venizelos, as we have seen, had stipulated for some months of delay; and now that they had been put aside, he still felt that the partial *épuration* did not suffice for his safety. No doubt, the bayonets which had pulled the King down were able to set him up. But M. Venizelos, for reasons both personal and patriotic, shrank from leaning on foreign bayonets more than was unavoidable. He had no desire to justify the nickname, bestowed upon him months ago,

[1] See Art. 4 of the Greek Constitution.
[2] Jonnart, p. 147.
[3] *Ibid*, p. 160.
[4] *Ibid*, p. 170.
[5] The *New Europe*, 29 March, 1917, p. 327.

of "*Archisenegalesos*" ("Chief of the Senegalese")—an epithet conveying the suggestion that he aimed at turning Greece into a dependency of France. M. Jonnart seemed to share this laudable delicacy.[1]

General Sarrail, however, cared nothing for appearances, but itched to get M. Venizelos out of Salonica at the earliest possible moment. His first favourable impression of the Cretan as "somebody" had not survived closer acquaintance. He considered him wanting in courage. He had no patience with his hesitations. He felt, in short, no more respect for him than men usually feel for their tools; and since he had never learned to put any restraint on his tongue, he expressed his opinion of this "ex-revolutionary transformed into a Government man" freely. The Greek was too discreet to say what he thought of the Frenchman; but as he was not less vain and domineering, their intercourse at Salonica had been the reverse of harmonious.[2] Thus the Leader of the Liberals found himself prodded back to the city from which he had been prodded nine months before.

He arrived on board a French warship off the Piræus on 21 June. But he gave out that he did not intend to come to Athens, or to call himself to power. An agreement, he said, had been reached between M. Jonnart and M. Zaimis to the effect that a mixed Ministerial Commission should be formed to negotiate the unification of the country.[3] That was true. With his usual sense of propriety, the High Commissioner would not dream of usurping the place of the acknowledged chiefs of the Greek people. It was for them to take the initiative. The "guaranteeing" Powers which he represented respected the national will too much to dictate the terms of the fusion between the two sections into which Greece had been so unfortunately divided. Therefore, he invited the heads of the two Governments, M. Zaimis and M. Venizelos, to enter into direct conversations: he offering to act as a simple ad-

[1] Jonnart, p. 159.

[2] Sarrail, pp. 102, 153, 234–5. One of their quarrels arose from the fact that General Sarrail claimed entire jurisdiction over the inhabitants of the country, many of whom he had deported to France as suspects and refused to give them up to the courts competent to deal with them.

[3] Reuter, Athens, 21 June, 1917.

viser, mediator, at most arbitrator. Both seized on the invitation.[1]

The main question had already been settled between M. Jonnart and M. Venizelos: the latter should return to power at once. But, legally he could only return by a parliamentary election, and, as he could not hope for a majority, neither he nor M. Jonnart wanted an election. It was accordingly decided that, since no reliance could be placed on the popular will of the present, an appeal should be made to the popular will of the past: the Chamber of 13 June, 1915, in which M. Venizelos had a majority, should be recalled to life, on the ground that its dissolution, in their opinion, was illegal. This decision—so well calculated to preserve externals with all the reverence which expediency permitted—was, on 24 June, formally conveyed by the High Commissioner to M. Zaimis, who, doing what was expected of him, tendered his resignation. The High Commissioner thanked him and promptly obtained from King Alexander a declaration that he was ready to entrust the Government to M. Venizelos, who only asked for a delay of two days to fetch his Cabinet from Salonica.[2]

Meanwhile, the news that M. Venizelos was coming had spread, and the return at that delicate moment of the yacht *Sphacteria* which had carried King Constantine away added fuel to the flame. In the evening (24 June), the crew of the boat, joined by students and reservists, paraded the streets with a portrait of the King and cried "Long live Constantine!" The column of demonstrators grew as it went along—the police being unable or unwilling to check it. Without a doubt, M. Venizelos was right: the *épuration* of the capital had not gone far enough. To prevent surprises, General Regnault, commander of the landing forces, immediately took the measures which he had carefully planned in advance. By dawn of 25 June, French troops with artillery had occupied all the heights round the town: they were to stay there as long as M. Venizelos wanted them—and, perhaps, even longer.[3]

[1] Jonnart, p. 161.
[2] Jonnart, pp. 162–73, 180–1.
[3] Jonnart, pp. 176–8, 199–201. The Italians, who had stepped into Epirus, only evacuated it when they made sure that their allies were quitting Thessaly and Attica.

Under such conditions the People's Chosen formed his Ministry (26 June), and nerved himself to face the people. Every preparation for his entry into the capital had been made. Nothing remained but to fix the hour. But this he evaded doing in a manner which puzzled and exasperated the French General. It was the goal towards which they had moved steadily and methodically, step tracing step, through so many weary months—the crown of their joint adventure. Why, then, did he not seize it? Why did he shrink from possession? What did he mean by it? The General did not know. But he felt that it would not do. "M. le President," he said to him, incisively, "Here you are in power; it is up to you to assume the responsibility. I have the force in my hands, and it is my business to secure your installation in Athens. But I must have your instructions. Tell me what measures you want me to take." The request was a command. M. Venizelos thanked the General effusively, pressing his hands. "After all," he said, "it is certain that people will always say that I did not return to Athens but with the support of the Allies." Finally it was arranged that he should land in the forenoon of 27 June. An ordeal which could not be avoided ought not to be postponed.

At the appointed hour the French troops entered Athens with their machine-guns and occupied the principal points along the route by which M. Venizelos was to proceed, while the vicinity of the Royal Palace where he was to take the oath of office and the interior of it were watched by 400 Cretan gendarmes, his faithful bodyguard, come from Salonica. Notwithstanding all these precautions, M. Venizelos and his Ministers, modestly averse from exposing themselves to the enthusiasm of their fellow-citizens, motored at top speed straight to the Palace, eschewing the central thoroughfares, and thence to the Hotel Grande Bretagne, in the corridors of which also Cretan stalwarts mounted guard. Thanks to this vigilance, as General Regnault observes, the assassins whom the Premier and his friends feared to see rise from every street corner, and even in the passages of the Palace and hotel, had not materialized. But M. Venizelos, where his own life was concerned, took no chances: a Cretan regiment

from Salonica landed that afternoon to replace the foreign battalions.[1]

Towards evening a demonstration organized in the square before the hotel gave M. Venizelos an opportunity of appearing on the balcony and making an eloquent speech. He reminded his hearers how the last warning he had addressed to King Constantine from the balcony of his house ten months ago had been disregarded, and how, in consequence, the part of the nation still healthy had risen to save the rest. The cure thus begun would go on until it had wrought out its accomplishment. In due time a Constituent Assembly would be elected to revise the Constitution so as to place beyond peradventure the sovereignty of the people. Meanwhile, the national system had been singularly enfeebled and corrupted by the late autocratic regime: the public services did not do their work as they ought; impurities had crept into the blood; the body politic needed purging. He would put all this right. He would restore the system to vigorous activity. Every impurity would be cleansed from it, and pure, refreshed blood would circulate all over the body politic, giving health to every fibre of the State. As to matters external, he thought it needless to say that the place of Greece was by the side of the Powers who fought for democracy.[2]

The next two days saw this programme at work.

A rupture of relations with the Central Empires, to be followed by a mobilization, marked the end of Greek neutrality. King Alexander, as yet a novice in statecraft, expressed surprise at the inconsistency between these acts and the repeated assurances given to the Greek people. He was told that the accession of M. Venizelos could mean nothing else but war: his Majesty knew it: having accepted Venizelos, he must accept his foreign policy.[3]

Not less was the young king's shock at another act of the new Government—the suspension, by a Royal Decree, of the irremovability of judges which is expressly guaranteed by the Constitution. "They accused my father of

[1] Regnault, pp. 100–2; Jonnart, p. 184; The *Morning Post*, 29 June, 1917.

[2] Jonnart, pp. 185–90.

[3] *Ibid*, pp. 191–3, 195–6.

violating the Constitution," he said to M. Jonnart, "and the first thing they ask me to do is to violate it." So acute an interpreter of Constitutional Law could have small difficulty in disposing of these scruples. He explained to the young monarch that he could sign the decree without any compunction: the Constituent Assembly which would be elected by and by to revise the Constitution would legitimatize everything. He went on to give him a little, simple lecture on the elements of Constitutional Verity, its theory and its practice: "In a short time," he concluded suavely, "Your Majesty will know on this subject as much as any of your Ministers,"—whenever he experienced the need of further instruction, he only had to call the High Commissioner, who promised to come and solve his perplexities in a trice.[1]

The soundness of the instruction might be questionable. But the source from which it came gave it unquestionable weight.

By the time M. Jonnart left Athens (7 July), he had every reason to feel gratified at the complete success of his efforts. France's protégé was installed at the head of the Hellenic Nation, ready to lead it forth by her side; the regular working of Constitutional institutions was assured; and the foundations of a democratic government were well and truly laid. In all history it would be difficult to find a more signal instance of brute force and bad faith triumphing in the name of Law and Verity.

[1] Jonnart, pp. 194–5.

CHAPTER XX

IT is not my intention to give a minute and consecutive account of the abnormal state which prevailed in Greece during a period of more than three years. I will, for once, flatter its authors by imitating their summary methods.

M. Venizelos, hating monarchy, yet unable to dispense with it; despising democracy, yet obliged to render it lip-homage; maintained his own unlimited power by the same system of apparent liberty and real violence by which he had attained it. The semblance of a free Constitution was preserved in all its forms: Crown, Parliament, Press, continued to figure as heretofore. But each only served to clothe the skeleton of a dictatorship as absolute as that of any Cæsar. King Alexander, without experience or character, weak, frivolous and plastic, obediently signed every decree presented to him. When recourse to the Legislature was thought necessary, the Chamber perfunctorily passed every Bill submitted to it. The newspapers were tolerated as long as they refrained from touching on essentials.

At the very opening of Parliament, for so we must call this illegitimate assembly, the King, in a Speech from the Throne written by M. Venizelos, expounded his master's policy, external and internal. Externally, Greece had "spontaneously offered her feeble forces to that belligerent group whose war aims were to defend the rights of nationalities and the liberties of peoples."[1] Internally, she would have to be purified by the removal of the staunchest adherents of the old regime from positions of trust and influence. But neither of these operations could be carried out save under the reign of terror known as martial law. Parliament, therefore, voted martial law; and M. Venizelos, "irritated by the arbitrary proceedings"

[1] For the full text of the Speech, see *The Hesperia*, 10 Aug., 1917.

of the Opposition, which protested against the restrictions on public opinion, "emphasised the fact that the Government was determined to act with an iron hand and to crush any attempt at reaction."[1]

Never was promise more faithfully kept. Within the Chamber it soon became a parliamentary custom to refute by main force. Sometimes Liberal Deputies volunteered for this service; sometimes it was performed by the Captain of the Premier's Cretan Guard, who of course had no seat in the House, but who held a revolver in his hand.

Out of Parliament the iron hand made itself felt through the length and breadth of the country.

With a view to "purging and uplifting the judiciary body" and "securing Justice from political interference,"[2] all the courts were swept clean of Royalist magistrates, whose places were filled with members of the Liberal Party. In this way the pernicious connexion between the judicial and political powers, abolished in 1909—perhaps the most beneficial achievement of the Reconstruction era—was re-established, and Venizelism became an indispensable qualification for going to law with any chance of obtaining justice.

An equally violent passion for purity led at the same time, and by a process as unconstitutional as it was uncanonical, to ecclesiastical reforms, whereby the Holy Synod was deposed and an extraordinary disciplinary court was erected to deal with the clerical enemies of the new regime, especially with the prelates who took part in the anathematization of M. Venizelos. Only five bishops were found in Old Greece competent or compliant enough to sit on this tribunal; the other seven came from Macedonia, Crete, and Mytilene, though those dioceses were under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople, whose sanction was neither asked nor given. With the exception of six, five of whom belonged to the disciplinary court, all the prelates of the Kingdom were struck by it: some were degraded and turned out to subsist as they might, on charity or by the sale of their holy vestments; others were sentenced to humiliating punishments; and

[1] The *Morning Post*, 9 Aug., 1917.
[2] Speech from the Throne.

where no plausible excuse for a trial could be discovered, exile or confinement was inflicted arbitrarily. On the other hand, as many as repented received plenary absolution. For instance, the Bishops of Demetrias and Gytheion were deprived for having cursed M. Venizelos; but on promising in future to preach the gospel according to him, they were not only pardoned, but nominated members of the second disciplinary court created to continue the purification of the Church. Even more instructive was the case of the Metropolitan of Castoria who was tried, convicted, and confined in a monastery, but after recanting his political heresies was retried, unanimously acquitted, and reinstated. All this, in the words of the Speech from the Throne, "to restore the prestige of the Church."

Side by side went on the reform of every branch of the Administration. All the Prefects, and many lesser functionaries, were discharged. Schoolmasters and schoolmistresses were dismissed by the hundred. The National University, the National Library, the National Museum, the National Bank, underwent a careful disinfection. In every Department the worst traditions of the spoils system prevalent before 1909 were revived and reinvigorated. Other measures marked an improvement on tradition. Some two thousand Army and Navy officers, from generals and admirals downwards, were put on the retired list or under arrest. And an almost hysterical desire manifested itself to strike terror into every civilian whom his opinions rendered objectionable and his position dangerous to the new order: tactics the full brutality of which was revealed in the treatment of M. Venizelos's principal adversaries.

M. Rufos, a former Cabinet Minister, languished in the Averoff gaol from 1917 until the spring of 1920, when the Athenian newspapers announced his release. About the same time M. Esslin, an ex-President of the Chamber, who had been imprisoned at the age of seventy-eight in the Syngros gaol, was released by death.

All the members of the Skouloudis Cabinet, with the exception of Admiral Coundouriotis, Minister of Marine, who had afterwards proved his patriotism by enlisting under the Cretan's banner, were arraigned for high treason,

referring mainly to the surrender of Fort Rupel. The preliminary examination dragged on from year to year and produced only evidence which established the innocence of the accused.[1] One of them, ex-Premier Rallis, in April 1920, after being for years libelled as a traitor, suddenly found himself exempted by Royal Decree from further persecution, because at that time M. Venizelos conceived the hope that this statesman might be induced to undertake the leadership of an Opposition accepting his regime. The rest, particularly M. Skouloudis and M. Dragoumis, one aged eighty-two and the other seventy-seven, after a long confinement in the Evangelismos Hospital, remained to the end under strict surveillance, with gendarmes guarding their houses and dogging their footsteps.

The Lambros Cabinet was similarly harassed, until one of its members turned Venizelist and three others died; among the latter M. Lambros himself and his Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Zalocostas. Both these gentlemen, though in poor health, had been confined on desolate islets of the Archipelago, where they were kept without proper medical attendance or any of the comforts which their condition required, and were only brought home to expire.

In each case—as also in that of the soldiers responsible for the surrender of the Cavalla garrison, whose "treasonable" conduct became likewise the subject of judicial investigation—trial was sedulously deferred by a variety of ingenious contrivances; nothing being more remote from the Government's mind than an intention to draw the truth into the light. The motive of these proceedings doubtless was one of policy chiefly—to ruin the enemies of the regime in public esteem by branding them as traitors, even if no conviction could be obtained. But policy was not the only element. To judge by the harshness displayed, there was the personal factor, too. M. Venizelos had had a feud with these men and had vanquished them. They were men whom, all things considered, it was more a shame to fight than an honour to vanquish—and they were humbled: they were in his power. For a proud spirit that would have been enough; it was not enough for

[1] It also brought to light documents of real historic value, such as the dispatches included in the *White Book* (Nos. 70 foll.).

M. Venizelos. He acted as if he wanted to enjoy their humiliation, and because he had them down to profit by their helplessness.

Identical treatment could not be meted out to those in Corsica and Switzerland, though some of them were sentenced to death by default for conspiring against M. Venizelos. But all that could be done from a distance to embitter their lot was done. Whilst at home the blackest calumnies were thrown upon them: in exile they were pursued by the same blight. Special attention was directed to the "arch-traitor." He had been dethroned and expatriated; but this was not enough. His pension was cut off. He and all the members of his family, with the exception of Prince George, who stayed in Paris, were forbidden to visit Entente countries, even for the purpose of attending the death-bed of a relative. Entente subjects visiting Switzerland were forbidden to go near them: lest any particle of the truth should percolate. Until the end of the War they lived segregated, shunned, and spied upon like malefactors. During the Liberal regime in Greece, while Italian and Swiss hotels flourished all the year round on Royalist refugees, Royalist exiles populated the semi-desert islands of the Archipelago: they were gathered in batches and shipped off—persons of every degree, from general officers whose guilt was attachment to their King, down to poor people convicted of owning the King's portrait. For the possession of a portrait of Constantine supplied one of the most common proofs of "ill-will towards the established order" (*dysmeneia kata tou kathestotos*)—a new crime invented to meet a new constitutional situation. It extended to the utmost confines of the kingdom. As the farmers were at work in the fields, gendarmes raided and ransacked their cottages for such portraits; butchers and fishmongers were haled before courts-martial for like indications of ill-will; and—matter for laughter and matter for tears are inseparable in modern Greek history (perhaps in all history)—one met a cabman beaten again and again for calling his horse "Cotso" (diminutive of "Constantine"), or a woman dragged to the police-station because her parrot was heard whistling the Constantine March. Volumes would be needed to record the petty persecutions which arose from

the use of that popular name: suffice it to say that prudent parents refrained from giving it to their children.

If enemies had to be frightened by every exhibition of severity, it was not less imperative to gratify friends by every mark of generosity. As already noted, a Mixed Commission had been appointed under the old regime to indemnify out of the public purse the Venizelists who suffered during the Athens disturbances of 1 and 2 December, 1916. This body, after the expulsion of the King, was remodelled by the substitution of a Venizelist for the Royalist Greek member; was authorized to enlarge its purview so as to cover all losses occasioned, directly or indirectly, by Royalist resentment throughout the Kingdom throughout the six months' blockade—including even the cases of persons who, compelled to flee the country, were torpedoed in the course of their voyage; and was invested with powers of deciding unfettered by any legislation or by any obligation to give reasons for its decisions. Thanks to their unlimited scope and discretion, the Commissioners, after rejecting some 2,500 claims as fraudulent, were still able to admit 3,350 claims and to allot damages representing a total sum of just under seven million drachmas.[1]

The number of old adherents confirmed in the faith through this expedient, however, was as nothing to the legions of proselytes won by the creation of new Government posts of every grade in every part of the Kingdom, by the facilities afforded in the transaction of all business over which the State had any control—which under existing conditions meant all important business—and by the favours of various sorts that were certain to reward devotion to the cause. Beside the steadily growing swarm of native parasites, profiteers, jobbers and adventurers who throve on the spoils of the public, marched a less numerous, but not less ravenous, host of foreign financiers, concession and contract hunters, to whom the interests of the State were freely bartered for support to the party in the Entente capitals.

The economic exhaustion caused by this reckless waste of national wealth, in addition to the necessary war ex-

[1] *Rapport officiel de la Commission mixte des indemnités*, Paris, 1919.

penditure, was concealed at the time partly by credits furnished to M. Venizelos in Paris and London, and partly by an artificial manipulation of the exchange for his sake. It became apparent when these political influences ceased to interfere with the normal working of financial laws. Then the Greek exchange, which at the outbreak of the European War stood at 26 or 27 drachmas to the pound sterling, and later was actually against London, dropped to 65, and by a rapid descent reached the level of 155. Thus in the domain of finance, as in every other, the valuable reconstructive achievement of 1909—which had led to the transformation of a deficit of from ten to twelve millions into a surplus of fifteen millions and to the accumulation of deposits that enabled the Greek exchange to withstand the shock of several conflicts—was demolished by its own architect.

The illusion that M. Venizelos had the nation behind him was diligently kept up by periodical demonstrations organized on his behalf: joy bells announced to the Athenians his home-comings from abroad, the destitute refugees harboured at the Piræus were given some pocket money and a free ticket to attend him up to the capital, the cafés at the bidding of the police disgorged their loafers into the streets, and the army of genuine partisans thus augmented with auxiliaries, accorded their Chief a reception calculated to impress newspaper readers in France and England. But observers on the spot knew that the "national enthusiasm" was as hollow as a drum, which under the manipulation of an energetic minority could be made to emit a considerable amount of noise; that the demonstrators to a large extent were a stage crowd which could be moved rapidly from place to place and round the same place repeatedly; that since the schism the great Cretan had loomed small in his own country and that he had grown less by his elevation.

Such terrorism of opponents and favouritism of adherents; such encouragement of oppression and connivance at corruption; such a prostitution of justice; such a cynical indifference to all moral principle—unparalleled even in the history of Greece—could not but make the Cretan's rule both odious and despicable. What made it more hateful still in the eyes of the people was the fact

that it had been imposed upon them by foreign arms, and what made it more contemptible still was the fact that it functioned under false pretences. As free men, the Greeks resented the violence done to their liberty; but as intelligent men they would have resented open violence less than a profanation of the name of liberty that added mockery to injury and administered a daily affront to their intelligence. There was yet a spirit of resistance in the country which would not be crushed, and a fund of good sense which could not be deceived. If they formerly anathematized M. Venizelos as a traitor, the masses now execrated him as a tyrant: a mean and crafty bully without bowels of mercy who gave licence to his followers to commit every species of oppression and exploitation in the interest of party.

Such were the feelings with which the very name of Venizelos inspired the mass of the people. And that the mass of the people was in the main right can scarcely be contested. It would, of course, be absurd to hold M. Venizelos directly responsible for every individual act of oppression and corruption, most of which occurred during his absences from the country and of which he was not cognizant. But it was he who had initiated both oppression and corruption. M. Jonnart's proscriptive lists were really M. Venizelos's, who had long since made his own enemies pass for enemies to the Entente. The "purification" of the public services, as well as the prosecutions, the imprisonments and deportations of eminent personages, some of whom died of the hardships and privations they underwent, were his own doing. The multiplication of offices and officials began with his creation, at the very outset, of two new Ministries; a measure to which even King Alexander demurred when the list of M. Venizelos's Cabinet was presented to him.[1] Nor is there upon record a single case in which the Chief seriously attempted either to restrain or to punish his subordinates. In truth, he was not free to do so. He was bound to the system he had brought into being and was irretrievably committed to all its works.

A man who gains supreme power against the wishes of

[1] Jonnart, p. 183: "A clean sweep in Greece."—The *Daily Chronicle*, 2 July, 1917—an outline of M. Venizelos's programme.

the majority, and only with the consent of a faction, cannot maintain himself in it except by force and bribery. He must coerce and corrupt. Moreover, to rule without a rival, he must surround himself with men vastly inferior to him both in talent and in virtue: men who, in return for their obsequious servility, must be humoured and satisfied. Whenever such a usurpation occurs, all the maxims upon which the welfare and freedom of a community normally rest are annihilated, and the reign of profligacy and of tyranny inevitably supervenes: a regime born in party passion must live for purely party ends.

We may break or circumvent all laws, save the eternal and immutable law of cause and effect.[1]

The best of M. Venizelos's followers sincerely regretted the unceasing persecution of their adversaries: they saw that stability could not be attained without conciliation and co-operation; but they did not see how clemency could be combined with safety. The thousands of officers and officials who had been turned out of their posts, and the politicians who were kept out of office found employment, and the private individuals who had suffered for their "ill-will towards the established order" relief in plotting and intriguing: there was so much unrest that the authorities had to use severe measures.

M. Venizelos himself wished to make his administration milder and cleaner and to broaden its basis—he was even credited with the one joke of his life in this connexion: "I will yet head anti-Venizelism." But the thing was beyond his power: he had not a sufficient following in the country to replace armed force; and he dared not trust the Royalists with a share in the government for fear lest they should use it against him. None, indeed, was more painfully conscious of the hate for him which every month increased in the breasts of his countrymen than M. Venizelos himself. From the very beginning of the schism he had assumed a prophylactic in the form of a cuirass;[2] and since his installation he neglected none of

[1] There have been usurpers, like Oliver Cromwell, who managed to temper tyranny with probity; but their cases are exceptional and their success only a matter of degree.

[2] An article of this kind was found in his house after the fighting of 2 Dec., 1916.

the precautions requisite for his personal security. During his rare sojourns in Athens he always went about escorted by his Cretan guards; while on the roof of a building facing his house stood two machine-guns, "for," as a witty Athenian informed an inquisitive stranger, "the protection of minorities."

In general, it is true, the plotting and intriguing which permeated the country were too fatuous to be dangerous. But every now and then they took on formidable shape. In November, 1919, a carefully organized military conspiracy at Athens only miscarried through the indiscretion of a trusty but tipsy sergeant. Among the letters intercepted and produced at the trial was one from a Royalist exile in Italy to another at home. The writer, a lady, reported her brother as wondering how anybody in Greece could fail to understand that there no longer existed such things as a Government and an Opposition, but only tyrants and tyrannized over, who worked, the former to maintain their arbitrary authority, the latter to shake it off and recover their liberty. The work of neither could, in the nature of things, be carried on according to any constitutional rule or law. He went on to argue that, under such conditions, deeds which would otherwise be crimes were justified and even glorified by history as unavoidable fulfilments of a patriotic duty: force must be met by force.[1]

So the national demoralization inaugurated by foreign pressure went on being promoted by domestic tyranny; and of cure there was no hope. Good men would not associate themselves with the Venizelist regime, because it was bad; and even men by no means notorious for goodness shunned it, not because it was bad, but because they were shrewd enough to perceive it was too bad to last.

[1] *The Hestia*, 27 Dec. (O.S.), 1919.

CHAPTER XXI

THE Liberal regime, having few roots in the soil and those rotten, could not but be ephemeral, unless the external force that had planted continued to uphold it: in which case M. Venizelos might have lived to weep over the triumph of his cause and the ruin of his country. This contingency, however, was eliminated in advance by the clashing ambitions of the Allies—the real guarantee of Greek independence. Foreign interference, made possible by the War, had to cease with it. And that was not all. M. Ribot, on 16 July, 1917, had declared in the French Senate that the changes brought about in Greece would have to be ratified by a Greek National Assembly. M. Venizelos also had, as we saw, stated on his advent that the 1915 Chamber was but a temporary solution: that in due time a Constituent Assembly would be elected to settle matters—a statement which he repeated shortly afterwards in Parliament: "The representatives of the Nation," he said, "watch with perfect calmness the internal evolution of the political life of the country and wait for the removal of the obstacles which do not permit the immediate convocation of the National Assembly that will lay definitely the basis of the State."

After nearly three years of "internal evolution," the time for the redemption of these pledges seemed to the people overdue. In vain did M. Venizelos endeavour to put off the day of trial by arguing that it was advisable to avoid the agitation inseparable from an election whilst Greece was still at war with Turkey, and by promising that the elections would follow close upon the signature of peace. It was natural that he should adopt this course: he could not but hope that the fruits of his foreign policy—fruits never even dreamt of a few years before—would reconcile the people to his domestic administration. It was equally natural that the people should be impatient:

Turkey may not sign peace for ages, they protested; meanwhile are we to go on living under martial law? They demanded the dissolution of the illegal and, at best, long superannuated Chamber, and fresh elections. The call for freedom grew louder, more insistent, more imperious and dangerous, until M. Venizelos took a first tentative step towards a return to normality.

On 6 May, 1920—the day of the publication of the Turkish Peace terms granted by the Allies at San Remo—a Royal Decree was issued at Athens abolishing martial law. As at a signal, the Press turned its search-lights on the inroads made into the Constitution. Abuses and excesses hitherto held back by the Censorship gained publicity. Political groups started organizing themselves for the electoral contest, with every grievance of the past as an incitement to action in the future. Most disturbing manifestation of all—though one that might have been foretold—streets and taverns resounded again with the song in which King Constantine was referred to as "The Son of the Eagle" leading his army to glory. Evidently the efforts to root up loyalism had not succeeded: far from it.

While M. Venizelos grew less by his elevation, King Constantine was raised by his humiliation to a condition, if not actually divine, half-way towards divinity. In many a house his portrait stood among the holy icons, with a light burning before it, and the peasants worshipped it much as their pagan ancestors would have done. It was but the culmination of a process long at work—a process in which the historical element was strangely mingled with the mythical.[1] Since the Balkan Wars, King Constantine had been identified in the peasant mind with the last Byzantine *Basileus*—his namesake, Constantine Palæologus, slain by the Turks in 1453; who, according to a widely believed legend, lay in an enchanted sleep waiting for the hour when he should wake, break with his sword the chains of slavery, and replant the cross

[1] There is always so much of mystery surrounding the peasant mind, that its workings must often be accepted rather than understood. But those who wish to understand somewhat the psychological process which led in antiquity to the deification of kings during their life-time could not do better than study the cult of Constantine among the modern Greek peasantry.

on the dome of Saint Sophia. This singular fancy—whether a case of resurrection or of reincarnation, is not clear—was strengthened by the fact that his fall occurred on the very anniversary (29 May/11 June) of the day on which that unfortunate Emperor fell in the ramparts of Constantinople. The coincidence completed the association between the monarch who sacrificed his life to save his people from subjection and the monarch who, after leading his army in two victorious campaigns and doubling the extent of his country, did not hesitate to sacrifice his crown to save his people from disaster. Henceforth, even in minds not prone to superstition, the two events were linked by the same date, the mourning for the one rekindled the memory of the other, and King Constantine acquired a new and imperishable title to the gratitude of the nation. If all the efforts made in the past to blast his glory or to belittle his services had only heightened his popularity, all the efforts made since to blot out his image could only engrave it still deeper on the hearts of the people. His very exile was interpreted, symbolically, as the enchanted sleep whence he would arise to fulfil the ancient prophecies.

Mysticism apart, during the sad period preceding his departure, the affection of the masses for their sovereign, intensified by compassion, had assumed the quality of veneration. Now that he was gone, they brooded over the wrongs which had driven him, a lawful and popular king, into exile: wrongs which suffered for their sakes enhanced his claims on their loyalty. They remembered wistfully the splendour of his victories, his manly courage, his saintly patience, and perhaps most of all his unfailing kindness to the humble and the weak. This was the quality which drew men most strongly to Constantine, and the absence of which repelled them most from M. Venizelos.[1] The experience of the last three years had helped to emphasize the contrast: when the Eagle's Son was up above, there were few vultures in the land; now there were vultures only. So the name of Constantine became a synonym for orderly government, loyalty to his person was identified with the principle of liberty, and the people who had never regarded Alexander as anything more than

[1] See Vice-Admiral Mark Kerr, in the *Morning Post*, 13 Dec., 1920.

a regent, who cried after the departing monarch from the shore at Oropus: "You shall come back to us soon," hailed the return to normality as presaging the return of the legitimate sovereign as well as of a legal Constitution.

This, however, was the very last thing the powers that were contemplated even as a remote potentiality. For them the monarch in exile was dead; and the sooner his memory was buried the better. Accordingly, a police circular, issued on 26 May, prohibited conversations favourable to the ex-king, pictures of the ex-king, songs in honour of the ex-king, cheers for the ex-king. And, these regulations having been found insufficient to curb royalist fervour, five days later M. Venizelos demanded and obtained from Parliament the re-establishment of martial law, on the ground that "talk about the return of the ex-king was calculated to excite public feeling; and then the Opposition might have cause to blame the Government for not respecting the freedom of elections." The question of the ex-king, he argued, was utterly irrelevant to the forthcoming contest: the people would not be called upon to elect a Constituent, but merely a Revisionist Assembly: "Who has said there is to be a Constituent Assembly?" he asked.

The answer, of course, was easy: he himself had said so, on his installation in 1917. But lapses of memory are permissible to statesmen who mean business. M. Venizelos wanted a National Assembly which would have powers to ratify the dethronement of the King, the suspension of the irremovability of judges, and all other revolutionary illegalities, besides perhaps altering fundamental articles of the Constitution—such as the right of the Crown to appoint and dismiss Ministers and to dissolve Parliaments—powers which essentially belong to a Constituent Assembly. But he wanted it to be merely Revisionist. The paradox made havoc of his logic; but it no way affected his purpose; which was that, while as Constituent in its nature the Assembly should effect any alterations in the government of the country that he desired, as Revisionist in name it would not be competent to discuss the restoration of the King, and, if it proved recalcitrant, would be subject to dissolution by the execu-

tive. Consistency and M. Venizelos had been divorced long ago, and the decree was now to be made absolute.

While these eccentricities prevailed at home, abroad the gamester-spirit of the Cretan scored its crowning triumph. By the Treaty of Sèvres (10 Aug., 1920), which embodied the territorial arrangements already made at San Remo, Greece obtained practically the whole of Thrace outside the enclave of Constantinople, and a mandate over Smyrna and its hinterland. No doubt, this enormous extension of the kingdom, though still largely problematical, appealed to that compound of idealism and greed (mostly greed) which constitutes Hellenic, as it does all other, Imperialism. But it did not fully compensate for the suppression of popular liberties within its frontiers. Except among the followers of M. Venizelos the national aggrandisement evoked but little enthusiasm: "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" wrote one of the Opposition leaders, voicing a widespread sentiment—a sentiment which, only two days after the publication of the Treaty (12 Aug.), found sinister expression. As he was about to leave Paris, M. Venizelos was shot at and slightly wounded by two Greek ex-officers. The assailants, on being arrested, declared that their object had been "to free Greece from its oppressor and to ensure freedom for their fellow-citizens."[1]

The Paris outrage had a sequel at Athens, as significant and more tragic. The followers of M. Venizelos, like those of King Constantine, included a set of fanatics who preached that the salvation of the country demanded the extirpation of their adversaries. To these zealots the moment seemed propitious for putting their doctrine into practice. "Hellenes!" cried one of their journals, "our great Chief, our great patriot, the man who has made Greece great and prosperous, the man who has made us proud to be called Greeks, has been murdered by the instruments of the ex-King. Hellenes, rise up all of you, and drive the murderers out of the fatherland." The Hellenes in general remained unmoved. But some gangs of hooligans did rise up (13 Aug.) and, under the eyes of the police and the *gendarmerie*, wrecked a number of Royalist newspaper

[1] The *Daily Mail*, Aug. 13, 1920.

offices, clubs, cafés, and sacked the houses of four prominent anti-Venizelist statesmen. The authorities, on their side, had a dozen leaders of Opposition groups thrown into prison and, pending their conviction, M. Repoulis, a Minister who in the absence of M. Venizelos acted as his Deputy, declared that the attempt on the Premier formed part of a plot long-planned for the overthrow of the regime: it had failed, but the heads of the culprits would fall without fail. In fact, one of the Opposition leaders—Ion Dragoumis, son of the ex-Premier of that name—was assassinated by the Cretan guards who had arrested him. The others, after being kept in solitary confinement for twenty-four days, had to be released for want of any incriminating evidence.

M. Venizelos in Paris, when he heard of the riots, was reported as being beside himself with righteous indignation; and he sent a strongly-worded telegram to the Government, expressing the fear that part of the responsibility for the disorders rested upon its organs, and assuring it that he should exact full account from everyone concerned.[1] But when he returned home he publicly embraced M. Repoulis, who explained in the Chamber to the entire satisfaction of his Chief that the Government had been overawed and very nearly overthrown by the extremists in its own ranks (8 Sept.).

Everything that could be done—short of a massacre—to disorganize and to intimidate the Opposition having been done, martial law was suspended (7 Sept.), and the question of Elections began to engage M. Venizelos's attention seriously. It was a trial which involved his political life or death, and therefore required the utmost care and vigilance: one ill-considered step, one omission on his part might send him to his doom.

He began with the enfranchisement of Thrace (9 Sept.). This province, still under military occupation and martial law, was to vote: further, a political frontier was erected between it and the rest of Greece, which only those possessing a special pass could cross, whilst a rigorous censorship kept all anti-Venizelist newspapers out of it; and, lastly, it was enacted, for the benefit of an electorate alien in its majority and unable to read or write Greek, that the

[1] *Eleutheros Typos*, 5/18 Aug., 1920.

Thracian votes, contrary to the general rule, should be polled by ballot paper, instead of by a ball.

Another Bill enabled the army on active service, for the first time in the history of Greece, to participate in elections, the assumption being that among the soldiers Venizelist feeling predominated, or that, at all events, they would be controlled by their officers.

As exceptional importance has always attached to the district and city of Athens—"which," M. Venizelos said, "symbolizes the very soul of the country,"[1]—it was incumbent upon him to pay special attention to this area. The difficulty was that the actual population was notoriously unsympathetic. M. Venizelos hastened to overcome this difficulty by three strokes of the pen: 18,000 refugees from all parts who lived on the Ministry of Public Relief were enrolled as Athenian citizens; to these were added some 6,000 Cretan gendarmes and policemen; and, to make up the deficiency, 15,000 natives of Smyrna, supposed to have earned Greek citizenship by volunteering in the war, had their names inscribed on the electoral lists of Attica.

There followed promises and warnings. On the one hand, the people were promised fresh labour legislation, the conversion of the great landed estates into small holdings, and public works on a large scale. On the other hand, they were warned that an adverse vote from them would have disastrous consequences for the country: Greece had been aggrandized by the Allies for the sake of M. Venizelos; if she discarded him, she would forfeit their goodwill and her territorial acquisitions. But M. Venizelos and his partisans did not trust altogether to the practical sense and the Imperialist sensibilities of the people.

For months past the extremists among his followers openly threatened that, if by any mishap Venizelos did not win the day after all, they would make a *coup d'état* and strike terror into the hearts of their adversaries. This threat, which primarily presented itself as an extravagance of irresponsible fanaticism, was on 7 September officially espoused by M. Venizelos, who declared in Parliament that, should perchance his adversaries obtain a majority in the new Assembly, and should that Assembly decide

[1] The *New Europe*, 29 March, 1917, p. 327.

to convoke a Constituent Assembly, and should this Constituent Assembly invite King Constantine back, the "Reaction" would find itself confronted with the hostility of a large political party which had become the mortal enemy of the ex-king; and he went on to foreshadow a fresh schism in the army: that is, civil war. Encouraged by so solemn a sanction, Venizelist candidates—notably at Tyrnavo in Thessaly and Dervenion in Argolis—told their constituents without any circumlocution that, in the event of a defeat at the polls, the Government would not surrender its power, but would maintain it through the Army of National Defence, which was pledged to a new Revolution: the Parliamentary system would cease to function even in name, and many a malignant would swing.

These appeals to the sovereign people, published in the Royalist and not contradicted by the Venizelist Press, will doubtless seem startling for a Government whose mission was to establish democratic liberties. But they were justified by necessity. M. Venizelos and his partisans could not afford to be very fastidious: their political existence was at stake: they must make every effort, and summon every resource at their command. Anyone who was in Athens at that time and saw the Cretan guards, often with the Premier's photograph pinned on their breasts, assault such citizens as displayed the olive-twig (emblem of the Opposition), or saw the gendarmes, who patrolled the streets with fixed bayonets, protect the excesses of Venizelist bravoes, would appreciate how far the Government was prepared to stoop in order to survive.

In the midst of these electoral activities, King Alexander died—of blood poisoning caused by the bite of a pet monkey. Alive he had neither exercised nor been wanted to exercise any influence over the destinies of his country: he had simply played the part required by the cast in which a whimsical fortune had placed him. His death proved of more importance, inasmuch as it forced the question of the throne upon M. Venizelos irresistibly: the vacancy had to be filled. Anxious to perpetuate the comedy, M. Venizelos sought a successor in a still younger and less-experienced scion of the dynasty: Prince Paul, a lad in his teens, who refused the offer on the ground that, until his father and his eldest brother renounced their rights,

he could not lawfully ascend the throne. After threatening to change the dynasty rather than admit any discussion on the restoration of King Constantine, M. Venizelos, by one of those swift turns characteristic of him, suddenly made that restoration the main issue of the Elections. He challenged the Opposition to this test of the real wishes of the Greek people. The Greek people, he said, should be given the chance of deciding whether it will have Constantine back; and if it so decided, he himself would go.

The Opposition, which consisted of no fewer than sixteen different groups united only by a common desire to get rid of the Cretan Dictator, would fain decline the challenge. Some of the leaders were ardent Royalists; others were very lukewarm ones; and others still could hardly be described as Royalists at all. Generally speaking, the politicians out of office had found in the cause of Constantine a national badge for a party feud. Moreover, they realized that the question of Constantine possessed an international as well as a national aspect, and they did not wish to compromise the future of Greece and their own; which would have been nothing else than stepping into the very pit M. Venizelos had dug for them. But neither could they repudiate Constantine without losing popular support: to the Greek people the main issue of the fight was indeed what M. Venizelos made it.

At length the day of trial arrived: a Sunday (14 Nov.)—a day of leisure in a land of universal suffrage. From an early hour people of all classes thronged the polling-stations quietly. They had clamoured for a chance of expressing their sentiments; yet now that the chance had come, they took it with an extraordinary composure. Even to the most expert eye the electors' demeanour gave no indication of their sentiments: the olive-twig had very curiously withered out of sight. Nor did the behaviour of the voters in the last three years afford any clue to the use they would make of their present opportunity. Greeks are past masters of simulation and dissimulation. Openly some might have pretended friendship to the Venizelist regime from hopes of favour, others again dissembled hostility through fear; but the voting was secret.

Both Government and Opposition shared the suspense,

though the Government anticipated an overwhelming majority;[1] which was natural enough, since all the advantage seemed on its side.

Presently the votes were counted—and "it was officially announced that the Government had been mistaken in its anticipations." The magnitude of the mistake appeared on the publication of the figures: 250 seats to 118: the Royalists had swept the polls, to the astonishment of all parties, including their own.[2] The very men who had fought at the bidding of M. Venizelos had pronounced themselves against him: having fulfilled their duty as soldiers, they vindicated their right to live as free citizens. His own constituency had rejected him. And would the rout stop there? Among the millions who had submitted to his rule with sullen irritation there were many whose hearts swelled with rage, in whom old wounds rankled and festered: might not these men now have recourse to other weapons than the vote in order to get even with the bully?

For a moment M. Venizelos felt stupefied: the edifice that had seemed so solid was collapsing about him, and he was in danger of being buried under the ruins. Then he wisely stole out of the country he had done his best to aggrandize and to disintegrate.[3]

The result of the elections was virtually an invitation to King Constantine to return and resume his crown. But the King, not content with an indirect verdict, wanted an explicit plebiscite *ad hoc*, clear of all other issues. The Allies, after a conference in London, telegraphed (2 Dec.)

[1] "Even if the Opposition sweeps the Peloponnese and gains a majority in Acarnania and Corfu, it is still doubtful whether it will have 120 seats in the new Chamber, which will contain 369 Deputies; and the Venizelists anticipate that their opponents will emerge from the struggle with less than 100 Deputies."—*The Times*, 15 Nov., 1920.

[2] The *Daily Mail*; The *Evening News*, 16 Nov, 1920; Reuter, Athens, 15 Nov.: "Not a single Venizelist was returned for Macedonia and Old Greece, except in Epirus and Ægean Islands."

[3] We learn that his followers "urged upon him the advisability of a *coup d'état*. It would have been the easiest thing in the world to carry out, and with so much at stake for Greece and for democratic principles generally, it seemed justifiable."—"M. Venizelos at Nice," in *The Times*, 29 Nov., 1920. But, "fears are entertained, it is said, that the regular Army—which is strongly anti-Venizelist—may get out of hand."—The *Daily Mail*, 17 Nov.

to M. Rallis, the new Greek Premier, that they "had no wish to interfere in the internal affairs of Greece, but they felt bound to declare publicly that the restoration of the throne to a king whose disloyal attitude and conduct towards the Allies during the War caused them great embarrassment and loss could only be regarded by them as a ratification by Greece of his hostile acts."[1] This message—yet another fruit of Franco-British compromise—was followed up (6 Dec.) by a second Note, enumerating the consequences, political and financial, of the Powers' displeasure. But it produced little effect: out of the 1,013,724 electors who took part in the plebiscite (7 Dec.), only 10,383 voted against the King.[2] M. Rallis, in acquainting him with the result, stated that he considered it tantamount to a formal request from the country to the Sovereign to come into his own again, and invited him to respond to the clearly expressed wish of the nation. Which King Constantine did, nothing loth.

Few of those who witnessed the event will ever forget it. On the eve of the King's return (18 Dec.) Athens could scarcely contain her emotion. All day long her beflagged streets rang with the cry: "*Erchetai! Erchetai!*" ("He is coming! He is coming!")—hardly anybody failed to utter it, and nobody dared to say "*Then erchetai*" ("He is not coming"), even if referring to an unpunctual friend. At night the song in which Constantine was alluded to as "The Son of the Eagle" echoed from one end of the illuminated city to the other. But this was only a preparation for next morning's welcome.

Owing to stress of weather the cruiser carrying the King and Queen of the Hellenes was compelled to put in at Corinth, where the exiles landed. From that point to the capital their journey was a triumphal progress. The train moved slowly between lines of peasants who, their hands linked, accompanied it, shouting: "We have wanted him! We have brought him back!"[3] When

[1] The terms of the Note were communicated to the House of Commons by Mr. Bonar Law the same night.

[2] Reuter, Athens, 9 Dec., 1920.

[3] Another version of this refrain, which might be seen in crude lettering over a café at Phaleron, is: "So we willed it, and we brought him back" (*Etsi to ethelame, kai ton epherame*)—a distinct expression of the feeling that the people, by bringing back its

the King stepped out at the station, officers fought a way to the carriage with blue and silver dressed postillions which waited for him and the Queen. He had to keep tossing from one hand to the other his baton, as men and women pressed upon him for a handshake. The carriage struggled forward, men and women clinging to its steps and running with it, trying to kiss the hands and feet of the royal pair, and baulked of this, kissing even the horses and the carriage itself. All the way dense masses of people pressed round the carriage, shouting: "He has come!" or singing the chorus, "Again our King will draw the sword." An eye-witness had a vision of a soldier who, amid cries of "We will die for you, Godfather!" clambered into the carriage head first and fell to kissing the knees of the King and Queen, while around people fainted and stretchers pressed through the crowd.[1]

And so the fight for the soul of Greece ended in a victory for Constantine.

The character of this prince has been painted in the most opposite colours, as must always be the case when a man becomes the object of fervent worship and bitter enmity. But the bare record of what he did and endured reveals him sufficiently. His qualities speak through his actions, so that he who runs may read. His most conspicuous defect was a want of suppleness—a certain rigidity of spirit which, when he succeeded, was called firmness, and when he failed, obstinacy. Yet the charge so often brought against him, that he allowed himself to be misled by evil counsellors, shows that this persistence in his own opinion did not spring from egoism nor was incompatible with deference to the opinions of others. It arose from a deep sense of responsibility: he stubbornly refused to deviate from his course when he believed that his duty to his country forbade deviation, and he readily laid down his crown when duty to his country dictated renunciation. For the rest, a man who never posed to his contemporaries may confidently leave his character to the judgment of posterity.

As for M. Venizelos, history will probably say of him

sovereign in the face of foreign opposition, asserted its own sovereignty.

[1] See *The Times*, 20 Dec.; The *Daily Mail*, 21 Dec., 1920.

what it has said of Themistocles: Though he sincerely aimed at the aggrandizement of his country, and proved on some most critical occasions of great value to it, yet on the whole his intelligence was higher than his morality—a man of many talents and few principles, ready to employ the most tortuous and unscrupulous means, sometimes indeed for ends in themselves patriotic, but often merely for aggrandizing himself. By nature he was more fitted to rule in a despotic than to lead in a constitutional State. Had he been born an emperor, his fertile genius might, unless betrayed by his restless ambition, have rendered his reign prosperous and his memory precious. As it is, in his career, with all its brilliance, posterity will find not so much a pattern to imitate as an example to deter.

AFTERWORD

IN default of a Providence whose intervention in human affairs is no longer recognized, there still is a Nemesis of history whose operations can scarcely be denied. International morality, strange as the juxtaposition of the two words may seem, exists no less than the law of gravity; and a statesman who offends against the one must expect much the same catastrophe as an engineer who ignores the other. But it is not often that this law of retribution asserts itself so swiftly as it has done in the drama for which Greece supplied the stage to French statesmen during the last few years; for it is not often that a Government in the pursuit of practical interests overlooks so completely moral principles, flouts so openly national sentiments, and, while priding itself on realism, shuts its eyes so consistently to realities.

The logic of French action is as above reproach, as its motives are beyond dispute.

Nine decades ago the Duc de Broglie clearly explained that the aim of France in assisting to liberate Greece from the Turkish yoke was to have in the Eastern Mediterranean an instrument of her own ambition: "a State disposed to turn her eyes constantly towards that Power who has made her free—to watch for us over the ports of the Levant, to guard with us the mouth of the Black Sea and the keys of the Bosphorus";—it followed that the greater the client, the better for the patron's purpose. After undergoing many fluctuations and modifications, this idea was revived at the time of the Balkan wars, when France, together with Germany, supported the Greek claim to Cavalla, and it was fostered to an unhealthy growth during the European War. Hence the identification of France with M. Venizelos, who stood for a policy of expansion at all hazards, and her hostility to King Constantine who, preferring safety to hazardous ventures, stood for Greece's right to shape her course without dictation from Paris any more than from Berlin.

By the methods which she employed, France succeeded in gaining Greece and losing the Greeks. Nothing else could have been expected: friends are sometimes to be won by good offices; sometimes by the promise of good offices; and sometimes by good words. They are seldom won by injuries, and by insults never. It is curious that so elementary a lesson in human nature should have been unknown to the able men who guided the policy and diplomacy of France during the War, who raised her military prestige and re-established her position in the first rank of the European Powers. Yet it is a fact—a fact which can be easily verified by a reference to their utterances: they are upon record. Brute force, and brute force, and again brute force: such is the burden that runs through them all; and it embodies a doctrine: the Greeks are Orientals and must be wooed with terror: on the notion, enunciated by an English humorist as a paradox, and adopted by French statesmen as an axiom, that terror sown in the Oriental heart will yield a harvest of esteem—even of affection. With this mad dogma nailed to her mast, France set out upon her voyage for the conquest of the Hellenic heart. It was the first of her mistakes—and it was accompanied by another.

Even if Greece were willing to play the part of a French satellite, she could not do so; for her geographical situation exposes her to the influence of more than one Power. Italy, who has her own ambitions in the Eastern Mediterranean, opposed during the War a policy the object of which was Greek expansion over territories coveted by herself and a readjustment of the balance of forces in favour of France; and it was partly in order not to alienate Italy during the War that French statesmen wanted Greece to come in without any specified conditions, leaving the matter of territorial compensations for the time of settlement. Russia showed herself not less suspicious of French diplomacy for similar reasons. But it was with England chiefly that France had to reckon. In the past the rivalry between France and England in the Eastern Mediterranean, though often overshadowed by their common antagonism, first to Russia and subsequently to Germany, was a perennial cause of discord which kept Greece oscillating between the two Powers.

During the War England, of necessity, lent France her acquiescence and even assistance in a work which she would rather not have seen done. But, once done, she endeavoured to secure such profit as was to be derived therefrom. The Greeks in Asia Minor—it was thought—could serve to check the Turks from troubling us in Mesopotamia and other parts of the Near and Middle East. Hence the Treaty of Sèvres, which provided for the aggrandizement of Greece at the expense of the Ottoman Empire in Asia as well as in Europe, to the seeming satisfaction of both French and British interests. But the adjustment—even if it had been forced upon Turkey—could, by the nature of things, be only temporary. Owing to her geographical situation, Greece must inevitably move within the orbit of the Power who dominates the sea.

Psychology accelerated a movement imposed by geography. While France based her action upon an English humorist's paradox, England based hers upon a French thinker's maxim: *Lorsqu'on veut redoubler de force, il faut redoubler de grâce.* Although her diplomatic, military, and naval representatives did participate in every measure of coercion and intimidation as a matter of policy, they (if we except the Secret Service gentry) never forgot the dictates of decency: they never, figuratively, kicked the person whom they deemed it necessary to knock down. The ordinary British soldiers, too, for all the relaxation of moral rules natural in war, maintained throughout the campaign a standard of behaviour which contrasted so favourably with their comrades' that it earned them among the inhabitants of Macedonia the honourable nickname of "the maids." It was particularly noted during the fire which devastated Salonica that, while others took advantage of the turmoil to loot, the British soldier devoted himself wholly to rescuing. Some of these things were perhaps resented by our allies as weak, and some were ridiculed as naïve; but they must be judged by their effect. At the end of the War one nation was respected by the Greeks as much as the other was hated and despised. British prestige rose exactly in proportion as French prestige sank. And the object which France elected to seek, and sought in vain, by

means of violence and terror, England attained by a conduct which, if not more lawful, was much more graceful.

Still, French statesmen counted on M. Venizelos—"*l'homme politique qui incarne l'idée de la solidarité des intérêts français et grecs*"—to keep his country on their side. And as in the first instance they had made the alliance conditional on his being placed in control, so now they made the benefits accruing from it to Greece dependent on his remaining in control. That M. Venizelos could not always remain in control does not seem to have occurred to them. Nor that he might not always be content to be a mere puppet in their hands. Murmurs at his pro-British leanings were indeed heard occasionally. But on the whole the Cretan possessed in an adequate measure the faculty of adapting himself to rival points of view, of making each Power feel that her interests were supreme in his regard, and of using the ambitions of both to promote his own. As long as he remained in control, France, with whatever reservations, felt sure of her share of influence.

The collapse of M. Venizelos and the demand of the Greek people for King Constantine's return, came to French statesmen as a painful surprise. That they had for several years been laboriously building on illusions could not be disguised, and being made to look absurd before those of their own compatriots who had all along advocated a policy based on the preservation and exploitation of Turkey, rendered the situation doubly awkward. Unable to rise above personal pique, they would fain veto the return of a prince whom they hated and whom they had wronged beyond hope of conciliation. England, however, free from petty animosities, and sensible that, under whatever ruler, Greece would be with her, refused to sanction lawlessness in the midst of peace; and her view that, if the Greeks wanted Constantine, it was their business and not ours, prevailed. But, on the other hand, by way of compromise, France obtained that he should return to an empty treasury, with foreign credits cut off, and the loans made by the Allies to the Venizelist Government, to facilitate the waging of a common war against Turkey, revoked.

It was an impossible position which King Constantine was called upon to face: a position none of his own making,

yet one from which there was no retreat. The Greek people's imperialism had been roused. The leaders who once criticized M. Venizelos's Asiatic policy as a dangerous dream, opposed to economic, strategic, and ethnic realities, might still hold those views and mutter in secret that Smyrna would prove the grave of Greece; but they no longer dared express them, out of deference to public opinion. To the masses M. Venizelos's wild game of chance seemed vindicated by its results, and while they rejected the man they clung to his work.

The Greek Government had no choice but to carry on the conflict under enormous disadvantages. As France anticipated, with foreign credits cut off and a progressive fall in the exchange, the expense of maintaining a large army on a war footing proved too heavy for the National Exchequer. And that was not the worst. France, who since the Armistice had betrayed a keen jealousy of England's place in a part of the world in which she claims special rights, presently concluded a separate agreement with Turkey—an example in which she was followed by Italy—and gave the Turks her moral and material support in their struggle with the Greeks; while England, though refusing to reverse her policy in favour of their enemies, contented herself with giving the Greeks only a platonic encouragement, which they were unwise enough to take for more than it was worth.

Everyone knows the melancholy sequel: our unhappy "allies," left to their own exhausted resources, were driven from the Asiatic territories which in common prudence they should never have entered; and the overseas Empire which M. Venizelos had conjured up vanished in smoke.

The rout in Asia Minor had its repercussion in Greece. For nearly two years the people, though war-worn and on the edge of bankruptcy, bore the financial as they had borne the famine blockade, trusting that England would at any moment come forth to counter the vindictiveness of France, and sturdily resisted all the efforts of the Venizelist party to shake the stability of the Royalist regime: Constantine again appeared in their eyes as a victim of the Cretan's intrigues. But the loss of Ionia and the danger of the loss of Thrace; the horror and

despair arising from the sack of Smyrna, whence shiploads of broken refugees fled to the Greek ports; all this, reinforced by an idea that the maintenance of the King on the throne prevented the effective expression of British friendship and his fall would remove French hostility, created conditions before which questions of personalities for once faded into insignificance, and put into the hands of M. Venizelos's partisans an irresistible lever.

On 26 September an army of 15,000 insurgent soldiers landed near Athens and demanded the abdication of the King. The loyal troops were ready to meet force by force. But the King, in order to avert a fratricidal struggle which would have dealt Greece the finishing stroke, forbade opposition and immediately abdicated, "happy," as he said, "that another opportunity has been given me to sacrifice myself once more for Greece." In fact, once more Constantine was made the scape-goat for disasters for which he was in no way responsible—disasters from which he would undoubtedly have saved his country, had he been allowed to pursue his own sober course.

M. Venizelos would not go back to Athens until the excitement subsided, lest people should think, he said, that he had had any part in the revolution: but undertook the defence of the national interests in the Entente capitals. His mission was to obtain such support as would enable him to save Greece something out of the ruin which his insane imperialism had brought upon her, so that he might be in a position to point out to his countrymen that he alone, after the disastrous failure of Constantine, had been able to secure their partial rehabilitation. That accomplished, he might then hope to become a perpetual Prime Minister or President.

France made it quite clear that no changes in Greece could alter her policy: however satisfied she might be at the second disappearance of the antipathetic monarch, it should not be supposed that, even were a Republic to be set up, presided over by the Great Cretan, her attitude on territorial questions would be transformed: Thrace, after Ionia, must revert to Turkey. French statesmen longed for the complete demolition of their own handiwork. M. Poincaré, in 1922, was proud to do what the Duc de Broglie ninety years before scoffed at as an

unthinkable folly: "*Abandonner la Grèce aujourd'hui, détruire de nos propres mains l'ouvrage que nos propres mains ont presque achevé!*"

England's expressed attitude was not characterized by a like precision. It is true that after the Greek debacle she dispatched ships and troops to prevent the Straits from falling into the hands of the Turks; but in the matter of Thrace she had already yielded to France: and how the restoration of Turkish rule in Europe can be reconciled with the freedom of the Straits remains to be seen.

What the future may have in store for Greece and Turkey is a matter of comparatively small account. What is of great and permanent importance is the divergence between the paths of France and England revealed by the preceding analysis of events.

From this analysis have been carefully excluded such superficial dissensions as always arise between allies after a war, and were especially to be expected after a war in which every national susceptibility was quickened to a morbid degree: they belong to a different category from the profound antagonisms under consideration. These—whatever the philosopher may think of a struggle for domination—present a problem which British statesmen must face frankly. It is not a new problem; but it now appears under a new form and in a more acute phase than it has ever possessed in the past—thanks to the success of the "knock-out blow" policy which governed the latter stages of the War.

With the German power replaced by the French, the Russian for the moment in abeyance, French and Italian influences competing in Turkey, French and British aims clashing in the Arab regions wrested from Turkey—while indignation at Occidental interference surges in the minds of all the peoples of the Orient—the Eastern Mediterranean offers a situation which tempts one to ask whether the authors of that policy have not succeeded too well? Whether in pursuing the success of the day—to which their personal reputations were attached—they did not lose sight of the morrow? Whether they have not scattered the seed without sufficiently heeding the crop? However that may be, unless this situation was clearly foreseen by its creators and provided for—a hypothesis

which, with the utmost goodwill towards them, does not appear very probable—they have an anxious task—a task that, under these conditions, demands from British statesmanship more thinking about the Near Eastern question and the Greek factor in it than was necessary before 1914.

As a first aid to an appreciation of the problem by the public—which the present crisis found utterly unprepared—it would have been well if the fundamental differences between the respective attitudes of France and England towards each other and towards the peoples concerned had been candidly acknowledged, and all pretence of Franco-British co-operation in the Near East abandoned. Lasting co-operation cannot be where there is neither community of interests nor consonance of ideas: where the loss of one party is welcomed as gain by the other, and the wisdom of the one in the eyes of the other is folly. Pious talk of a common Allied mission in the Near East has only served to obscure issues and to render confusion in the public mind worse confounded. It was idle to make a mystery of the support given by France to the Turks and of her insistence on the revision of the Sèvres Treaty—preliminary steps to her demand for the evacuation of Chanak and the consequent elimination of British sea-power. The object of these tactics was evident to every serious student of history: France pursues now the plan laid down by Louis XIV, continued by Napoleon, fitfully carried on throughout the nineteenth century, and facilitated by her installation in Syria—the equivalent of the German *Drang nach Osten*: a plan incompatible with the safety of the British Empire in the East. This is the truth of the matter, and nothing has been gained by hiding it.

The people who fought a ruinous war without quite knowing the ends aimed at, had a right to know at least the results obtained; and after France's separate agreement with Turkey, the denial to them of any part of that knowledge could not be justified on any principle of honour or plea of expediency.

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